Technology and Employment Programme

Technological and Organisational Change, Employment and Collective Bargaining in Australia

by

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Working Papers are preliminary material circulated to stimulate discussion and critical comments

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The rapid and widespread diffusion of micro-electronic based computing and information technologies in the past fifteen years has been accompanied by intensive discussion and debate about their effects on employment and work. Trade unions have been at the centre of much of this debate. The new technologies challenge traditional union practice and ideology, and have the potential to threaten the future of unions as an industrial and political force in advanced industrial economies.

On the other hand, the union movement is regarded as being primarily responsible for leading efforts to bring the changes wrought by the new technologies under some form of social control. The new technologies, coupled with new management techniques, have the potential to reshape the previous Fordist model of industrialisation into a new, post-Fordist age which will provide opportunities for more worker participation and control, enhanced skills through training, and increased career opportunities.

This paper examines the situation in Australia where a strong trade union-Labor Government alliance has been in power since 1983. Acknowledging the terms of the debate described above, the Australian labour movement has attempted to control and direct the rapid technological and economic changes in a social democratic, post-Fordist fashion.

The paper is divided into three main parts, reflecting the major areas of concern held by unions in Australia since the late 1970s, which arise from the application of new technology. These concerns translate roughly into the three main types of employment flexibility - procedural, numerical, and functional flexibility respectively.

Section 2 of the paper traces the history of attempts by Australian unions to gain formal rights to participation and influence over the introduction of technology. Section 3 looks at another issue which has been of concern to unions - the impact of technology on employment patterns. It shows that Australia, like most other industrial countries, has experienced a major shift away from traditional, full-time, permanent employment.

These two Sections show the relative lack of success by unions in influencing the control of new technology at the workplace and the implications it has had for employment patterns. Consequently, a third area of concern - the impact of new technology on jobs themselves - has assumed greater importance, and forms the subject of Section 4. Extensive reforms to the 'awards' which govern employment and industrial relations in Australia are being made with the aim of restructuring work organisation and jobs so that they encourage training and career paths for all workers. In attempting this restructuring process, the industrial relations system has become much more decentralised, although within a regulated national framework. Trade unions have largely set this agenda, facilitated by the Labor Government and the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

The concluding section discusses the extent and likely durability of the successes achieved, in light of increasing criticism and frustration from both employers and sections of the union movement about the pace, direction and impact of the industrial relations reforms. It argues that despite its achievements to date and its comprehensive and broad sweep, 'award restructuring' (as the process of workplace reform has come to be known) appears fragile, precisely because of its ambitious nature. It has been asked to shoulder responsibility for a number of policy areas - wages policy, industry development, work organisation, industrial relations, and education and training policy - for which it is only partially responsible.

In particular, progress in work organisation and training may be held back by the inability of the economy to deliver real wage increases and to overcome the problems of manufacturing industry. Solutions for these issues must, in large part, lie elsewhere in industry policy. Putting all the emphasis on award restructuring is asking too much of it, and may indeed put the potential gains in workplace reform at risk.
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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<td>ACAC</td>
<td>Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission</td>
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<td>ACTU</td>
<td>Australian Council of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>AECRC</td>
<td>Australian Education Council Review Committee</td>
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<td>AFR</td>
<td>Australian Financial Review</td>
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<td>AGPS</td>
<td>Australian Government Publishing Service</td>
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<td>AIIRC</td>
<td>Australian Industrial Relations Commission</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<td>AMC</td>
<td>Australian Manufacturing Council</td>
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<td>AMWU</td>
<td>Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union</td>
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<td>AP</td>
<td>Australia Post</td>
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<td>APTU</td>
<td>Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union</td>
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<td>ASE</td>
<td>Australian Society of Engineers</td>
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<td>ATEA</td>
<td>Australian Telecommunications Employees' Association</td>
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<td>AWIRS</td>
<td>Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey</td>
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<td>BCA</td>
<td>Business Council of Australia</td>
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<td>CAI</td>
<td>Confederation of Australian Industry</td>
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<td>CATU</td>
<td>Clothing and Allied Trades Union</td>
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<td>CMA</td>
<td>Cost Minimisation Approach</td>
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<td>COHA</td>
<td>Contractors, Outworkers, Homeworkers and Agencyworkers</td>
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<td>DEIR</td>
<td>Department of Employment and Industrial Relations</td>
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<td>DIR</td>
<td>Department of Industrial Relations</td>
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<td>DITAC</td>
<td>Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPMC</td>
<td>Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
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<td>FCAI</td>
<td>Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries</td>
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<td>FCU</td>
<td>Federated Clerks Union</td>
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<td>FIA</td>
<td>Federated Ironworkers' Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIMEE</td>
<td>Federation of Industrial, Manufacturing and Engineering Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>FVIU</td>
<td>Federation of Vehicle Industry Unions</td>
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<td>IRC</td>
<td>Industrial Relations Commission</td>
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<td>MEWU</td>
<td>Metal and Engineering Workers Union</td>
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<td>MTFU</td>
<td>Metal Trades Federation of Unions</td>
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<td>MTIA</td>
<td>Metal Trades Industry Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLCC</td>
<td>National Labour Consultative Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCR</td>
<td>Optical Character Recognition</td>
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<td>PEA</td>
<td>Productivity Enhancement Approach</td>
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<td>PKIU</td>
<td>Printing and Kindred Industries Union</td>
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<td>R &amp; E</td>
<td>Restructuring and Efficiency</td>
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<td>SDAEA</td>
<td>Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association</td>
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<td>SEP</td>
<td>Structural Efficiency Principle</td>
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<td>TCF</td>
<td>Textiles, Clothing and Footwear</td>
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<td>TCR</td>
<td>Termination, Change and Redundancy</td>
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<td>TDC</td>
<td>Trade Development Council</td>
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<td>Trades Union Congress (U.K.)</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid and widespread diffusion of micro-electronic based computing and information technologies in the past fifteen years has been accompanied by intensive discussion and debate about their effects on employment and work. The new technologies are commonly regarded as heralding new forms and patterns of employment, work organisation, industrial relations and human resource management, and placing new pressures on the institutions involved in labour market regulation (Piore and Sabel, 1984).

Trade unions have been at the centre of much of this debate. The new technologies give rise to changes which challenge traditional union practice and ideology, and have the potential to threaten the future of unions as an industrial and political force in advanced industrial economies. Some observers argue that the potential for the new technologies to intensify traditional Fordist management (i.e. neo-Fordism), divide the workforce and dilute and weaken the broader social role of unions is a very real possibility, if change is left in the unfettered control of management (Carmichael, 1984; Mathews, 1989a).

On the other hand, and in Australia in particular, the union movement is regarded as being primarily responsible for leading efforts to bring the changes wrought by the new technologies under some form of social control, which can enable a new era of production and work organisation to arise. The new technologies, coupled with new management techniques, have the potential to reshape the previous Fordist model of industrialisation into a new, post-Fordist age which will provide opportunities for more worker participation and control, enhanced skills through training, and increased career opportunities (Mathews, 1989b).

The outcome between these two scenarios is held to depend to a large extent on the role played by unions - and governments - in asserting control over the processes through which the new technologies are introduced and diffused throughout the economy (Mathews, 1989a,b).

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The outcome between these two scenarios is held to depend to a large extent on the role played by unions - and governments - in asserting control over the processes through which the new technologies are introduced and diffused throughout the economy (Mathews, 1989a,b).

In this paper, the situation in Australia will be examined. Australia represents an interesting case study, since it has had a strong trade union-Labor Government alliance in power since 1983. Moreover, the labour movement in Australia has explicitly acknowledged the terms of the debate described above, and attempted to control and direct the rapid technological and economic changes in a social democratic, post-Fordist fashion.

The paper is divided into three main parts, reflecting the major areas of concern held by unions in Australia since the late 1970s, which arise from the application of new technology. These three areas are:

(i) the control of technology, and in particular, the importance of participation by unions and workers in the introduction and implementation of technological change, and a more equitable sharing of the costs and benefits brought about by new technology;

(ii) the impact of new technology on employment and work patterns. Of particular note here was the union fear that new technology might not only destroy jobs, but also weaken full-time regular employment, replacing it with less secure forms of employment; and

(iii) the impact of new technology on jobs. For example, there was widespread fear of deskilling, increased supervision, and changing skill boundaries which would threaten union organisation and control over the labour process.

It is possible to place these concerns in a more contemporary context by treating them as different types of flexibility - procedural, numerical, and functional flexibility respectively (Rimmer and
Zappala, 1988). The paper looks at each of these areas in turn, examining the relative success of the union movement in achieving its goals.

Throughout the discussion, it needs to be borne in mind that the Australian labour movement has been operating in a period of extensive restructuring and pain for Australian industry and the economy in general. The past decade of Labor Government began and ended with unemployment rates of over ten per cent and crises in the important rural sector; there has been a huge increase in the balance of payments deficit, which was exacerbated by a severe deterioration in the terms of trade facing Australia's major commodity exports; manufacturing employment has slumped in the face of heightened competition from imports (assisted by the lowering of tariff rates); and the orgy of speculation in the mid-1980s which followed the floating of the Australian dollar and the removal of exchange controls resulted in a series of spectacular company bankruptcies in the aftermath of the October 1987 stock market crash.

This restructuring - much of which was deliberately induced through policies aimed at integrating Australia into the global economy - has not provided the most propitious context for a labour movement to attempt to steer workplace and technological change in a direction conducive to the broader aims of labour. Its efforts are all the more interesting as a result.

Section 2 of the paper traces the history of attempts by Australian unions to gain formal rights to participation and influence over the introduction of technology. It reveals that despite major advances in legislation and in the compulsory arbitration system along the lines of moves in other countries, the impact of these measures on union influence over technology at the workplace has actually been quite limited.

Section 3 looks at another issue which has been of concern to unions - the impact of technology on employment patterns. It shows that Australia, like most other industrial countries, has experienced a major shift away from traditional, full-time, permanent employment. Three case studies explore in more detail the interactions between firm and industry strategies, technological change and trade union policies, which have accompanied and influenced the rise in non-standard employment forms.

As Sections 2 and 3 make clear, the relative lack of success by unions in influencing the control of new technology and the implications it has had for employment patterns has resulted in an increased focus on a third area of concern - the impact of new technology on jobs themselves. This is the subject of Section 4. Extensive reforms to the 'awards' which govern employment and industrial relations in Australia are being made with the aim of restructuring work organisation and jobs so that they encourage training and career paths for all workers. 'Award restructuring' - as this process has come to be known - has, in effect, become the mechanism the union movement has adopted in order to influence the first two areas of concern (i.e., union participation and the impact of technology on employment patterns) which were discussed in Sections 2 and 3.

In attempting this restructuring process, Australia has seen a transformation of its industrial relations system, which has become much more decentralised, although within a regulated national framework. Trade unions have largely set this agenda, facilitated to a great extent by the Federal Labor Government and the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

The concluding section discusses the extent and likely durability of the successes achieved, in light of increasing criticism and frustration from both employers and sections of the union movement about the pace, direction and impact of the industrial relations reforms.
2. THE CONTROL OF TECHNOLOGY: TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY IN AUSTRALIA

Union policies on new technology and on industrial democracy arose separately in Australia. The ACTU, the peak union council, first adopted a policy on automation and technical change in 1975, and introduced a policy and guidelines on industrial democracy in 1977. However, the two areas became increasingly intertwined in the late 1970s (Lansbury and Davis, 1984). Unions came to see the procedural issues of employee and trade union rights to information, notification and consultation on the introduction and impact of technological change as the essential prerequisites to achieving substantive goals such as better wages, reduced working hours, retraining and redundancy pay (Deery, 1987).

Union policy and action finally culminated in the historic Termination, Change and Redundancy decision of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (ACAC) in late 1984, which granted much of what the unions had demanded. However, the impact of that decision on union influence and control over technology has generally been disappointing, and unions have consequently altered their approach to issues of industrial democracy and new technology.

2.1. Background

The issue of technological change has traditionally been seen as part of managerial prerogative in Australia, with very little scope at all for bargaining by unions or employees (Deery, 1984; Lansbury and Davis, 1984). Australia was not, of course, unique in the lack of effective control by workers over technology (Albertijn et al., 1990; Fisher and Robb, 1989; Williams and Steward, 1985). However, a number of factors peculiar to Australia made prospects for union influence very unlikely. Three factors in particular accounted for the lack of influence and interest by unions in technological change - the post-war boom, constitutional and political factors, and the Australian system of industrial relations based on compulsory arbitration (Lansbury and Davis, 1984).

The existence of full employment during the 'long boom' of the 1950s and 1960s cushioned any employment displacement caused by the introduction of new technology, and meant that redundancy and unemployment was not a major issue for most unions.

In addition, the protected and insular nature of Australian industry which prevailed as a result of high tariffs meant that technological change was not very widespread or rapid outside of isolated industries such as mining, stevedoring and banking.

Australia's federal system of government divided industrial relations powers between the States and the Commonwealth government, and their respective industrial tribunals (Markey, 1987). As a result, the legislative route used in Scandinavia, for example, to provide workers and unions with a minimum standard of procedural and substantive rights in the introduction of technological change, was effectively closed off: the Commonwealth Government had no jurisdiction in the matter, while State Governments were reluctant to act unilaterally.

In addition, for the post-war period from 1949 until 1972, the conservative Liberal-Country Party coalition was in government at Federal level, and was unsympathetic to any intervention into industrial relations on behalf of trade unions.

The most important influence on the treatment of technical change, though, was the system of conciliation and arbitration in Australia, which governs its industrial relations (Deery, 1984). The industrial tribunals and commissions (at the Federal level, the ACAC), who are
responsible for ruling on the industrial awards governing the wages and conditions of most workers in Australia, operated with a very narrow definition of what constituted an 'industrial dispute', confining it to wages and conditions only. Decisions about technological change were regarded as part of the function of management and therefore not subject to bargaining or arbitration.

The arbitration system has had a strong influence on the structure, resources and attitudes of the main parties to the system - unions and employers - and on the relationship between them (Curtain, 1990a). This has had a major impact on the way in which technology has been treated at the workplace in Australia.

Trade unions, for example, were ill-equipped to bargain over technological change, even had they wanted or been able to. Partly arising from the protection afforded to them by the arbitration system, and partly due to their British origins, trade unions in Australia were (and are) predominantly craft and occupational-based. This is reflected in the large number of unions in Australia (around 300), most of which are very small, with less than 10,000 members.

Given this situation, it is not surprising that union resources were centralised in order to focus on events and hearings in the industrial tribunals. As a result, workplace union structures were generally very weak. Small membership and low union dues gave unions limited financial resources for research, and restricted their interests primarily to wages and conditions (Davis and Lansbury, 1989). They relied on the political arm of the labour movement, the ALP, to act on their behalf on non-industrial issues.

Employers were also unsuited and generally unwilling to negotiate over technological change. Most technologies were imported from overseas, with little control by local firms. Employers had relatively under-developed workplace bargaining structures, relying heavily (especially in manufacturing) on employer organisations and tribunal rulings. Employer groups generally agreed with the narrow interpretation of industrial matters favoured by the ACAC, and opposed participation by unions in what they saw as management of the enterprise (Davis and Lansbury, 1989).

In addition, the bargaining patterns engendered by the arbitration system encouraged third party intervention (through the industrial tribunals) to settle disputes, which meant that there was little incentive on behalf of firms and unions to develop on-going relationships at the workplace (Curtain, 1990a).

Consequently, Australian industrial relations had very little enterprise focus. Awards were generally occupational based, as were unions. Thus, multiple awards and multiple unionism were common throughout industry. Bargaining was narrowly conceived, and adversarial in nature.

In effect, the system of industrial relations in Australia was characterised by what one commentator has referred to as 'structured irresponsibility', in which managerial fiat ruled over work organisation and in which unions and workers had very little identification with the well-being of their enterprises (Rimmer, quoted in Curtain, 1990a).

The only areas of real union involvement in technological change occurred where the unions involved were in a strong strategic position to interrupt change, and where the proposed changes would have a major impact on the industry concerned and on the unions involved. One such example was containerisation in the stevedoring industry in the mid-1960s (Deery, 1984). In that industry, the major union - the Waterside Workers' Federation - concentrated on winning big severance payouts for displaced workers, plus substantially improved wages,
conditions and reduced hours for the (much smaller) workforce which remained. There was no negotiation at all on the introduction and implementation of the technology itself.

2.2. Increased Union Concern in the 1970s

Complacency began to give way to increased interest and concern from the mid-1970s, with a number of unions and the peak union council, the ACTU, beginning to form policies on the introduction of technology. The ACTU first introduced a policy on Automation and Technology in 1975, on Industrial Democracy in 1977, and a renewed policy on Technological Change (coupled with a special conference on the issue) in 1979.

The main reasons for the increased interest were two-fold: continuing high rates of unemployment following the oil crisis of 1973, and the fear that the widespread and rapid introduction of the new micro-electronic technologies would have an adverse impact on job prospects in the tertiary sector, which had traditionally been able to 'soak up' the surplus labour arising from increased productivity in the manufacturing sector (Lansbury and Davis, 1984).

Union concerns centred around the employment implications of the new technologies, both in terms of unemployment and the attempt to introduce less secure forms of employment such as part-time, casual and junior labour. In addition, there was a general fear of deskilling, concern at the lack of Australian control of the new technologies (most were imported and controlled by multinationals), and a desire for a more planned and participative introduction of the technologies to minimise the harmful effects of their introduction (Riches, 1984).

Policies to combat these concerns were a combination of procedural and substantive remedies. A common demand was for unions to be informed by management about impending decisions on new technology, and to be able to negotiate on the introduction and implementation of the technology. There were calls for government to act, through legislation, to make such participation mandatory, and to insist on Technology Impact Statements to examine the likely effects of new technology (Lansbury and Davis, 1984). Substantively, unions demanded that the productivity and wealth gains from new technology be shared between workers and management through such means as reduced working hours, increased pay and, where job loss was unavoidable, statutory redundancy pay, with a long period of notice to allow retraining and job search activity to take place (Hagan and Markey, 1982).

Union attitudes to technology were generally defensive, and despite the increased salience of the issue, it was still only a small minority of unions which adopted comprehensive policies to deal with it. For example, Markey found that only 19 unions had a policy on technical change in 1979 (out of more than 300 unions in total), and that the ACTU policy differed from the British TUC in its omission of any positive statements about the possibility of using new technology to generate a revival of industry (Markey, 1987).

As was to be expected, the unions to show most concern about technology were those most affected, and the most successful tended to be the unions with a more skilled and committed membership who were in positions of strategic power over the production process (Markey, 1987). For example, two of the most successful unions in battles over the introduction of technology in this period were the printing union, the PKIU, and the Telecom union, the ATEA.

The PKIU, after losing a major strike in 1976 over the introduction of electronic typesetting, adopted a much more positive attitude to technical change thereafter, and concluded a new technology agreement in 1979 following two years of negotiations with the major daily
newspaper organisations. This agreement allowed no forced redundancies through technological change, and provided for a voluntary redundancy agreement, retraining and redeployment for any 'surplus' workers, reduced working hours, a new system of wage and skill classifications (which reduced the number of classifications in the skilled trades from 27 to 4), and a joint training committee, in return for an acceptance by the workforce of new printing technology (Frenkel, 1990; Riches, 1984).

The ATEA dispute and eventual agreement with Telecom has been well documented elsewhere (Lansbury and Davis, 1984; Mathews, 1989b; Riches, 1984). Briefly, the dispute resulted in a pilot trial of two technological solutions, one favoured by management and the other by the union, and resulted in a third, compromise (and better) system being installed. The subsequent agreement established new consultative procedures giving the union notification rights at the conceptual stage of any new technology. In addition, a no redundancy provision was agreed, and much wider criteria for judging the appropriate choice of technology (including social and human factors) were adopted.

However, most studies of technological change and union responses in the late 1970s and early 1980s showed that unions failed in general to make major inroads into managerial prerogatives on the issue of the introduction of technological change. Examples of failures, despite reasonably well thought-out policies, occurred in the banking, railway, motor vehicle, and retail industries (Lansbury and Davis, 1984).

The extent of the failure of most unions to influence technological change became evident during the deliberations in 1979-80 of the Committee of Inquiry into Technological Change in Australia (Deery, 1984). While the Committee took a fairly optimistic view of technical change and its impact on employment, and rejected the ACTU's preference for government legislation, it did recommend that a test case be brought to the ACAC in order to set minimum standards on notification and consultation with workers about technical change, and to establish principles of redundancy pay for displaced workers. This was supported by the ACTU and other unions, who presented a case to the Commission in 1981. However, the conservative Fraser Government (and employers) refused to support the case, and it languished until the election of the Hawke Labor Government in March 1983.

2.3. Progress in the Tribunals and the High Court

The changed political and industrial climate ushered in by the election of the Hawke Government in 1983 gave unions new opportunities to extend their influence over a range of industrial relations matters at all bargaining levels. The Accord signed between the ALP and the ACTU provided for extensive consultation at national level on prices and incomes policies, and on a range of other social and industrial issues, including technological change. It also committed the government to

"support the establishment of rights for employees, through their unions, to be notified and consulted by employers about the proposed introduction of technological change. The Government will also support the establishment of fair redundancy protection for workers including a requirement on employers to consult with unions in redundancy situations" (ALP/ACTU, 1983)

The following two years saw a series of breakthroughs in various industrial tribunals, granting rights to unions over issues previously regarded as belonging exclusively within the realm of managerial prerogative. The two most important cases concerned the Commercial Clerks Award in Victoria, and the Termination, Change and Redundancy (TCR) case in the ACAC. Both resulted in acceptance of the rights of employees and unions to be consulted over the introduction of technology.

-6-
(a) The Commercial Clerks Case

The High Court, in December 1984, upheld a decision by the Victorian Industrial Relations Commission which inserted a clause into the Commercial Clerks Award in that State requiring employers to consult with the Federated Clerks Union of Australia (FCU) and affected employees about any proposed technological change. The decision was a significant extension of union rights, and was all the more surprising for having been brought forward by a traditionally weak and non-militant union.

The Victorian IRC insisted that employers must notify the FCU and any employees who may be materially affected in their employment by the change, of any decision to begin feasibility studies on technical change. During the feasibility study, the FCU and affected employees must be consulted and provided with sufficient technical information to enable the union to evaluate the likely effects of the new technology; they must be advised once a decision has been made and informed of likely employment effects; and they must be consulted on any alternative proposals which might eliminate or lessen likely material effects.

Although the provisions apply only to clerical workers in one State, they have become the pattern setting standard in Australia. As we shall now see, they provide stronger entitlements to information and consultation than in the more well-known Termination, Change and Redundancy decision.

(b) The Termination, Change and Redundancy Case

Of wider significance than the Clerks award was the Termination, Change and Redundancy (TCR) national test case, which also resulted in an extension of union rights to be informed and consulted about technical change.

The TCR decision of the ACAC in August 1984 imposed a requirement on employers to consult with employees and unions before introducing major changes to production methods or to the structure of their organisation. Employers had to consult with affected employees and their unions 'as early as practicable' after the employer had made a 'definite decision' to make the changes, on the introduction of the changes, the effect of the changes, and measures to mitigate or avert any adverse effects arising. The employer also had to give 'prompt consideration' to matters raised by employees and their unions, and provide all relevant information in writing.

As significant as the rights to consultation and information were the establishment of minimum standards for redundancies. These required employers to give notice ('as soon as practicable') of a definite decision to retrench labour, to consult with relevant employees and unions on the reasons for the retrenchments and on ways to avoid or minimise them, and to provide the information in writing. The decision set standards of severance pay for retrenched workers, dependant on years of service (with a one year minimum period of employment as qualification). These rights were not restricted to cases of technological change, and took Australian employment protection into line with overseas practice.

The TCR decision was not as strong as the Clerks' case in many ways. Rights to information and consultation were to come into force after a definite decision by management to introduce change, whereas the Clerks' case gave these rights at the feasibility stage. Also, the TCR decision excluded some confidential (primarily commercial) information from the process, while the Victorian decision was more liberal in its interpretation of such matters.

1The following two sections are based on Deery, 1989b.
However, the TCR decision did employ a wider definition of change, while the Victorian case was more strictly confined to the introduction of new technology.

In general, though, the decision was a major inroad into managerial prerogatives, and seen as an important victory by the trade union movement in its attempts to impose some control over the process of technological change, and to provide proper protection for workers adversely affected by such change. A senior ACTU official said soon after the TCR decision that it was 'the most significant change to job security provisions in sixty years and brought Australia in line with long-established practice in Western Europe' (Boulton, quoted in Curtain, 1990a).

(c) Other Developments

These two cases, plus the Social Welfare Union case in 1983 (Davis and Lansbury, 1989) and the High Court's decision in the Cram case in 1987, extended the definition of 'industrial matters' well beyond its traditional boundaries. Managerial prerogative was also restricted in other areas, such as equal employment opportunities policy and in occupational health and safety, where legislation giving much strengthened rights to workplace safety representatives was enacted in most States (mainly by Labor Governments).

These developments, plus significant support for industrial democracy in general from the Hawke Government (see discussion below on page 11), heralded a new era in union and employee influence over the process of change (including technical change), and over the workplace in general (Davis and Lansbury, 1989).

It might be expected, therefore, that subsequent studies would show a major increase in the involvement and influence of unions over issues such as technical change, especially through use of the TCR clause. However, with some exceptions, this has not generally proved to be the case.

2.4. Evidence on Union and Employee Influence over Technical Change

Despite the publicity, there have been no follow-up studies to specifically examine the use by unions of the 'introduction to change' clause inserted into most awards as a result of the TCR decision. As a result, evidence about the effectiveness of the TCR decision must be implied from the results of other studies which have examined the influence of unions and employees on the introduction of technical change into the workplace.

In general, the results of most studies have shown a limited degree of influence by unions on technical change. Deery, for example, in his study of the Clerks Union, has shown that despite their victory in the Victorian IRC, the FCU has been unable to translate this advantage into effective influence at the workplace (Deery, 1987, 1989b). This has been confirmed by Collins, a Queensland FCU official, whose survey of members affected by technical change showed little meaningful consultation with employers (Collins, 1988).

A study of shop stewards in the printing industry by Frenkel also showed limited consultation on technical change - and little interest by shop stewards in the matter (Frenkel, 1990).

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2This decision (Cram v NSW Colliery Proprietors' Association Ltd, 16 July 1987, F.C. 87/030) rejected the previously successful argument that manning and mode of recruitment were exclusively matters for management.
The retailing, insurance and banking industries have seen major technological changes in recent years, and their unions have been keen to exercise some influence over the process. However, in most cases they have been successfully ignored by management, with only the Commonwealth Bank and the AMP Society involving their (company-based) unions to any extent (Griffin, 1984; Markey, 1987).

More extensive surveys of companies have shown similar results. The Business Council of Australia’s survey of over 100 large workplaces revealed that union resistance to technological change was minimal (11% of plants), and successful resistance even less likely (only 1%). In addition, the survey found only 16% of plants believed that unions had even a little say over major equipment purchases, compared with well over half on redundancies (almost 40% had a lot or a great deal of influence over this issue). Only 11% of companies with shop steward/management committees had discussed technical change issues (BCA, 1989).

A similar, but slightly less stark, story is found with the major survey of Australian workplaces (known as AWIRS) carried out in 1990 by the Department of Industrial Relations. Despite three or four years of enterprise bargaining under the new national wage case principles (see below), a third of plants had not negotiated technical change at all. The figure for the services and wholesale and retail trade sectors was over 50%, while it was almost 40% for private sector workplaces as a whole (26% of the public sector). Technological change was the most recently negotiated issue in only one per cent of workplaces. Questioned about their extent of involvement in significant changes in the past two years (of which technical change was one of the most important, having affected 34% of plants), unions were not informed in 46% of plants (76% for wholesale and retail trade), informed in 26%, and consulted in 28%. Employee, as opposed to union, involvement was greater, but still left 23% not informed and only 32% consulted (DIR, 1991a).

In general, then, it would appear that despite the award protection achieved through the TCR decision, union and employee involvement in technological change is still quite limited, in both access and influence. As expected by Deery’s model on the determinants of trade union influence over technological change (Deery, 1989a), those unions with most resources and workplace presence (such as unions in manufacturing and public utilities), in areas where management style is more inclined to encourage participation, or where legislation has been enacted to ensure participation (such as in the Federal Public Service - see discussion below), have had the most influence over the process and impact of technological change.

2.5. Reasons for the Limited Impact of TCR

The limited impact of the TCR decision, and other similar changes to industrial awards, can be attributed to a number of factors, some of which are peculiar to the decision itself, and others of which reflect the general structure of industrial relations in Australia which, as shown earlier, mitigates against the effective involvement of unions and workers in decision-making on technical change.

With regard to the TCR decision itself, it became clear quite soon afterwards that the decision was only a limited step forward in enhancing employee input into the choice, introduction and implementation of new technology. A number of reasons account for this caution:

- the decision was not mandatory. The TCR clause was not inserted automatically into all Federal awards, and State tribunals had still to decide on the issue. Rather, the TCR was a guideline to unions seeking to adopt the change. Unions had to apply to insert TCR-style
clauses in their awards - this was a time-consuming process, and a number of awards have still not had the relevant clause inserted (Markey, 1987)³.

- not all State industrial tribunals followed the exact terms of the Federal decision. Although most variations related to the generosity of redundancy payments, some also altered the interpretation of the 'introduction to change' clause, with the Tasmanian tribunal rejecting the interpretation of the Federal ACAC on this matter and upholding managerial prerogative (Journal of Industrial Relations, 1986).

- the decision did not apply to firms with less than fifteen employees, which comprise most businesses and a quarter of all private sector employees.

- the TCR clause only obliges employers to inform and consult with employees and their unions after a definite decision to purchase and introduce new technology has been made. Nor does it require the two parties to reach agreement about the issue, or to bargain about the actual decision on which type of technology is to be introduced - management retains the final decision-making power. While the Victorian Clerks award allows earlier involvement at the planning stage, Deery says of both decisions that 'put simply, unions ... have been given the right to be involved in ex post facto bargaining about the consequences of change' (Deery, 1989b, p. 275). Many options about the choice of technology have been cut off even before the Clerks decision comes into effect.

In addition to the deficiencies of the TCR decision, there are a number of other factors which have limited its impact. One of the most important of these is that the structural weaknesses of the industrial relations system - identified earlier - have for the most part persisted, despite efforts to shift the focus of bargaining to the workplace. Union workplace groups are still relatively weak, unions are still predominantly occupationally based and they have few resources to handle issues of technological change.

A less expected reason for the failure of the TCR clause to increase union influence over technical change is that obtaining rights to bargain over technological change per se has not had the high priority for many unions that was originally anticipated, due to the limited nature of much technological change in Australia. In printing, for example, the major developments in technology occurred in the late 1970s; change since then has tended to be incremental and able to be dealt with through normal bargaining channels (Frenkel, 1990). In addition, technological change was seen more positively by the union and its shop stewards, who associated it with investment in the future - a point which echoes a recent study in Britain (Daniel and Hogarth, 1990).

Similarly, Frenkel's survey of metal and engineering firms in the mid-1980s showed that the technological change that had occurred was limited in scope and sophistication. Only 6% of plants were using CNC/DNC machine tools or CAD/CAM (Frenkel, 1987).

A recent survey by the Federal Government confirmed this view of the relatively limited adoption of new technology by Australian manufactures (DITAC, 1991). It showed that only a third of manufacturing establishments had introduced any types of advanced manufacturing technologies (AMTs). The most common technologies - NC/CNC machine tools and programmable logic controllers - were present in just over ten per cent of all firms. While large firms had the highest take-up of AMT, their general investment was still quite low (for example, only 15% had installed CAD/CAM equipment and a similar figure used

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³Examples of major awards still without an 'introduction to change' clause include the National Building and Construction Industry Award and the Waterside Workers Award.
basic robots). In smaller firms, which make up the vast majority of manufacturing plants, no single type of new technology was operating in more than ten per cent of surveyed plants. New management techniques were just as scarce, with only 15% of all surveyed firms having introduced TQC and JIT, and only 5% using Manufacturing Resource Planning.

It would appear, then, that one of the main reasons for the limited impact of the TCR decision may have been the relative lack of new technology in Australian industry in general, which in turn has lessened its salience as an issue for unions. Instead, the limited and negative purposes to which technology is put by most Australian industry is reflected by the much more frequent use of the redundancy clause arising from the TCR decision, which has been the main focus of union bargaining (Ogden, 1990).

These findings have not meant that technological change has been ignored by trade unions. In fact, the union movement has begun to take a much more positive view of technology in recent years, arguing that without it, Australian industry and employment will be jeopardised. Some unions have seen potential in new technology for a re-organisation of work which could have the effect of providing workers with increased responsibility, enabling them to increase their wages and their skills through a skill-based career path, and removing the Tayloristic organisation of many modern workplaces. They are critical of Australian management for its lack of investment in new technology, and its failure to adopt new management techniques in a way which enhances workers' skills, preferring instead to concentrate on cutting jobs and direct labour costs (ACTU/TDC, 1987; Ogden, 1990).

Nor has industrial democracy been removed from the unions' agenda. Indeed, there has been a great deal of activity concerning industrial democracy in the past decade, especially in the public sector and at peak interest group level. However, the TCR decision has not been a major factor in these developments.

The most significant advance was the Federal Public Service Reform Act 1984, which contains a section (s. 22c) requiring departments to develop and maintain industrial democracy action plans. Each department (which includes most statutory authorities and agencies) is required to develop and review its industrial democracy plan in conjunction with relevant unions, and to report to the Department of Industrial Relations on progress. The Department's most recent report to the Prime Minister showed that consultative committees were well established in most departments, with a wide range of issues and activities being covered. Nearly all departments had sub-committees on occupational health and safety and on equal employment opportunity, and a substantial number also had sub-committees dealing with technical change (DIR, 1991b).

In addition to progress in the Federal Public Service, there has been broader support for industrial democracy at the national level from government, industry and trade unions. The Federal Government released a discussion paper in December 1986 (DEIR, 1986) which stressed the need for increased employee participation, but ruled out a prescriptive, legislative approach to the issue. Following its release, peak union and business groups issued a number of joint statements supporting increased consultation, information sharing and participation, regarding them as an essential part of economic reform (CAI/ACTU, 1988; CAI/BCA/ACTU, 1986; NLCC, 1988). The importance of such participative practices to the successful introduction and operation of new technology was highlighted. However, progress was to be achieved through persuasion, not legislation - although the ACTU, in its own publications, argued for a stronger approach (ACTU/TDC, 1987). While mainly of
symbolic importance, such joint statements supporting a participative approach have proven useful on occasions for unions in negotiations with employers.\textsuperscript{4}

The form in which industrial democracy has been pursued (in the private sector, in particular) has changed from the concerns of the early 1980s which led to the TCR decision in 1984. Rather than concentrating on procedural rights, in the abstract, the emphasis has been placed increasingly on using industrial democracy in concrete, workplace negotiations over particular issues (Ogden, 1986).

This has been the approach of the metal unions, for example, who have been one of the prime instigators in the union movement's efforts to challenge traditional managerial prerogatives. It has also been the approach used in the more 'mature' industries which are facing major increases in competition from the decline in tariff barriers and the general deregulation of the Australian economy. Tripartite industry plans in the passenger motor vehicle, steel, heavy engineering and textile, clothing and footwear industries have all included a strong element of industry planning and workplace industrial democracy (Ogden, 1990). Decisions on technology investment, however, have still been left largely to the business concerned.

As a consequence of the relative failure of the TCR decision to radically increase industrial democracy in the workplace, technological change as a discrete issue has been relegated to the sidelines in Australian industrial relations. The ACTU did not have a specific policy or debate on the subject at its last three conferences in 1987, 1989 and 1991. Where technology is being introduced, negotiations about it have generally been conducted under the auspices of the industry plans, the various national wage case principles, or award restructuring. TCR - as a vehicle for negotiating technological change - has been virtually discarded. As one senior ACTU official has argued, 'just focussing on particular technological change in isolation ... is a short sighted approach that will fail in the long term. Hence we have sought to get unions to negotiate the introduction of technological change as one important part of a total system, rather than as a thing in itself' (Ogden, 1990, p. 3).

Section 4 of this paper will look at the major changes to the industrial relations system in Australia which have occurred over recent years, and which form the context in which the ACTU has attempted to put these 'total system' ideas into practice. Before that, however, we turn to look at the employment patterns generated by new technology and work organisation, and union efforts to influence the process.

3. EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS AND TECHNOLOGICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Increased unemployment and the erosion of the standard forms of full-time employment as a result of the introduction of new technology and associated organisational and workplace change, have been a consistent feature of union concerns since the mid 1970s.

The relationship between technological change and unemployment is not dealt with in detail here, except indirectly through various industry case studies. Suffice to say that the earlier fears expressed by unions of mass unemployment as a direct result of the introduction of new technologies have not been realised. In fact, the Hawke Government has presided over a sustained increase in employment at the fastest rate in the OECD which has only been halted by recession in the past year. The relative impact of macro-economic policies (especially the

\textsuperscript{4}The postal union, the APTU, quoted the joint CAI/ACTU statement extensively in its negotiations with Australia Post over the introduction of new technology (see Mathews, 1991 and p. 39 below).
wages Accord between the government and the unions), general industry restructuring, productivity trends, world economic conditions, and technological change on the level of employment is not easily discerned. In the midst of the current recession, it is difficult to sustain an argument that the rapid rise in unemployment has been related to technological change, and few unions have argued the point.

This section concentrates instead on the proliferation of non-standard forms of employment, and its implications for the workforce, for unions and for industry restructuring. It does so in the context of the current debate about flexibility, and in particular the 'numerical flexibility' which such forms of employment offer to employers. Such flexibility is provided through enabling employers to adapt more efficiently to fluctuations in demand brought about by seasonal factors, extended opening hours, or by the requirements of new management techniques (such as Just-in-Time). Non-standard employment also enables capital equipment to be used more intensively through reducing downtime.

Non-standard types of employment have invariably been viewed suspiciously by unions and their supporters. Lever-Tracy argues that there are three main fears about an increase in non-standard employment: the loss of full-time jobs for those who want them; an increased intensity of work and enhanced management control of the work process; and an increasingly divided and segmented workforce (Lever-Tracy, 1988).

In essence, there is concern that non-standard employment will be detrimental both to the workers in these positions, and to workers in full-time, permanent jobs whose wages, conditions and jobs will be under threat from the peripheral workforce being created.

In this section, we look at the evidence on non-standard employment in Australia. The most common of these 'numerically flexible' employment types are part-time, casual and self-employed workers, and we look at each in turn before considering other, less common forms of flexible employment. Reasons for the increase in non-standard employment will be examined. We will then consider three industry case studies - retail trade, the clothing industry, and banking - to highlight developments in recent years and in particular to show the dilemmas which the growth in these types of employment have had for trade unions.

As with the case of union influence over technological change, it will become apparent that 'the Australian labour market is inexorably becoming more flexible and more deregulated' (Burgess, 1990, p. 251), despite union efforts to slow the process. The significance of this development, and the issues it raises for the various actors in the industrial relations system are also discussed.

3.1. Numerically Flexible Employment - The Aggregate Picture

Non-standard forms of employment have been increasing as a relative proportion of the workforce in Australia over the past twenty years, as they have in most other Western countries. The most common of these 'numerically flexible' types of employment are part-time, casual and self-employment. We now look at each in turn, and a number of other measures of numerical flexibility, and examine the reason for their increased number.

(a) Part-time Employment

Part-time employment constituted over 22% of the Australian workforce in 1991, more than doubling the proportion since 1971 (Table 15). As in other countries, part-time work is
concentrated among women. 40% of women in employment are part-timers, and women constitute around 75% of all part-time workers.

The AWIRS found that two-thirds of all workplaces employed at least one part-timer, but that the incidence of part-time employment was quite segregated. For example, almost 20% of workplaces had part-timers make up more than half their workforce, while over half of all workplaces had less than 10% of their workforces in part-time jobs (DIR, 1991a). This was mainly a function of the concentration of part-time work among certain industries. Part-time work is most prevalent in recreation and personal services, the retail industry, and community services (Table 2).

The rise in part-time employment has commonly been seen as a combination of labour market demand factors (an increased preference by employers for part-time workers), supply factors (an increase in the number of available workers - for example, married women and students wanting to work part-time), and structural changes in the occupational and industrial composition of the workforce. Rapid growth in those industry sectors which tend to employ more part-timers (especially the service sector), has been argued by many observers as the main cause of the increase in part-time employment in Australia (Lever-Tracy, 1988; Carter, 1990; Berry and Kitchener, 1989).

Work by Robertson (1989) and Sadler and Aungles (1990), however, disputes this popular perception. Their separate analyses of the various components making up the increase in part-time employment show that 'the growth of part-time employment is influenced by the shift to part-time jobs and not by the growth in service industries' (Sadler and Aungles, 1990, p.292). They find that virtually all industries have increased the proportion of part-time workers in total employment (service industries more than most), and that this is the most important factor in the growth of part-time work (see Table 2).

The relative importance of labour market demand and supply factors in bringing about this increase is less certain, however. Robertson opts for demand factors, arguing that the scarcity of full-time jobs is pushing people into part-time jobs. He cites an increase in the number of involuntary part-time workers as support for his case. Sadler and Aungles, by contrast, suggest that there are far more willing than unwilling part-time workers, and that this increase in the supply of part-time workers is the most important influence.

Two labour supply factors are of particular note in the expansion of part-time employment. The first is the increased labour force participation rates by women - who have a greater propensity to work part-time - from less than 45% in 1983 to over 52% in 1991 (ABS, 1991). The participation rates of men - who by contrast are predominantly full-time workers - has dropped slightly, from almost 77% in 1983 to just under 75% in 1991.

The second factor has been the big rise in teenage educational participation, coupled with a corresponding decline in full-time employment for this age group. Year 12 completion rates have jumped from around one-third to well over 60%, while for 15-19 year olds as a whole, educational participation has risen from 36.9% in 1983 to 66.7% in 1990 (AECRC, 1991). Further rises are likely in the face of recession, as well as deliberate government policy aimed at boosting participation in school, higher and further education.

The rise in educational participation has been accompanied by a dramatic fall in employment by teenagers, especially full-time employment, to the stage where 'at no single year from the ages of 15 to 19 is full-time employment now an activity for a majority of teenagers' (Sweet, 1991, p. 10). Around 40% of all teenage employment is now part-time, almost double the average for all age groups. Half of these part-time workers are school students, and another
quarter are tertiary students; 29% of all 15-19 year old full-time students now have a part-
time job, and a further 6% are looking for one (Sweet, 1991).

Lever-Tracy argues that part-time work is more a reflection of gender segmentation in the
labour market, than of genuine choice by workers (or perhaps, even, by management). She
contends that there is a bifurcated measure of flexibility in Australian industry. In
manufacturing, and in industries dominated by male employment, numerical flexibility is
provided by regular, full-time employees working overtime (or short-time), and through
voluntary labour turnover. In industry sectors dominated by female employment, overtime is
virtually absent and flexibility is provided through the use of part-time and casual workers.

There is little evidence yet in Australia, she argues, of part-time work intruding into
manufacturing, or of part-time workers replacing full-time jobs, except in retailing. Instead,
'part time work has followed, rather than caused, the lines of gender segmentation'. More
worryingly, however, is that it 'now perpetuates that segmentation and restricts women to a
limited range of jobs and grades' (Lever-Tracy, 1988, pp. 227-8).

(b) Casual Employment

Statistics on casual employment are collected less often and are less reliable. The situation is
not helped by the generally uncertain definition of what constitutes a casual employee. The
Australian Bureau of Statistics, for example, defines it as those 'who were not entitled to
either annual leave or sick leave in their main job'. Definitions differ across the various
jurisdictions of the Federal and State industrial tribunals (Dawkins and Norris, 1990). Casual
workers in Australia are not 'unprotected workers'; their wages and conditions of
work are covered by industrial awards, and in fact they receive a wage premium for being
employed on a casual basis. It would be expected, however, that their employment is more
flexible and precarious than permanent work.

Using the ABS definition, recent evidence appears to suggest that around 20% of the
Australian workforce were employed on a casual basis in 1989. This compares with less
than 14% in 1982 (see Table 3). Over 60% of casuals are women, and almost 30% of
women are employed as casuals (26% in 1984). Male casual employment has also increased,
from 9.4% of total male employment in 1984 to 13.1% in 1989. As with part-time work,
most casuals work in the service sectors of the economy.

There is a strong correlation between casual and part-time employment, with 70% of casuals
being employed part-time (and, coincidentally, 70% of part-timers being casual workers).
Women casual workers tend to be part-time workers, while male casuals are split more
evenly between full-time and part-time employment (with the construction industry being a
major employer of full-time casuals).

Dawkins and Norris put forward at least four factors to help explain the increase in casual
employment. On the demand side, they argue that the cost of employing full-time, permanent
employees may have increased relative to casual employees. Whereas the casual premium of
around 20% has remained fairly static, the costs of permanent employees have risen through,
for example, such measures as compulsory occupational superannuation and the training
levy. A second reason may be the reduced training costs associated with casuals (who tend
to have a higher labour turnover than permanent employees) in industries which have
introduced deskilling new technologies, such as the retail and banking industries (see case
studies below). A third demand factor, which is especially relevant for the retail industry, is

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6Section 4 gives more information on these developments.
the increase in opening hours which, when combined with the introduction of a five-day working week for full-time staff, has increased the attraction of casual employees to employers. Finally, steep increases in school and higher education participation rates have lowered the availability of younger people for full-time and permanent jobs and increased the demand for casual jobs (see the discussion on the part-time employment, above).

Sweet's discussion of casual work provides a slightly different explanation. While acknowledging all the above factors, he argues in addition for 'an interaction between fluctuating workloads, low rates of unionisation and low wage rates as an explanation for casualisation' (Sweet, 1990, p. 10). Fluctuating demand alone is an insufficient explanation of the incidence of casual work: the waterfront and transport sectors both have low casualisation rates despite fluctuating workloads.

With regard to industry and occupational shifts, Dawkins and Norris estimate that just over half the increase in casual employment is due to industry changes, while 40% is due to an increase in the incidence of casual employment within industries. How much of this 40% increase reflects a change in labour supply factors (i.e., the increased availability and preference of women and students for casual work), and how much it is due to a deliberate change in employers' recruitment practices to employ casuals, is less easy to determine. The case studies below will explore this question further.

(c) Self-employment and other non-employees

Definitional problems abound with other forms of non-standard employment, such as employers, the self-employed, sub-contractors, outworkers, homeworkers, agency workers and unpaid family workers. Burgess has put these people into a category of 'non-employees', and has found a substantial increase in their number and their proportion of the overall labour force - from just under 14% in 1972 to over 16% in 1988 (Burgess, 1990). Private, non-agricultural non-employees have risen even faster - from 12.7% in 1972 to 17.9% in 1987. If agriculture is included, over one fifth (21.8%) of the private workforce in Australia were non-employees in 1987. Australia ranked second only to Britain in the growth of such workers in advanced industrial countries.

The proportion of self-employed people in Australia - the biggest category of non-employees - rose from 7.6% of the workforce in 1972 to 10.8% in 1986. It has remained fairly constant over the past decade, at around 10%. Employers have remained at around 5% of the workforce in the same period.

Other studies have confirmed the prevalence of non-employees in the workforce. The AWIRS, for example, found that 25% of workplaces with more than five employees, and 47% of workplaces with more than twenty employees, used at least one contractor, outworker, homeworker or agency worker (COHA) (DIR, 1991a). However, in total they only constituted about 3% of employment on average across all workplaces, with little significant variation except for the size of workplace (with the use of COHA's increasing for bigger workplaces) and greater use of COHA's in the public sector.

Burgess gives six possible reasons for the increasing number of non-employees. He rejects the first - recession and the increase in unemployment - because the proportion of non-employees increased despite the sustained fall in unemployment in Australia during the 1980s. (However, he later concedes that non-employees may disguise the real level of unemployment [Burgess, 1990, p.249]). The five other reasons he cites (but without assessing their relative importance) are: sectoral shifts (with the increase in services outweighing the negative impact of a decline in agricultural employment); technical change and the reduction in entry barriers in certain industries (e.g., instant printing, word
processing); a change in labour preference (e.g., the 'entrepreneurial spirit'); government policies and assistance for new small businesses; and changed policies by larger business (e.g., the use of COHA's).

Another indicator of the increase in non-regular employment is the increase in the number of workers not covered by industrial awards. Traditionally, the vast majority of wage and salary earners in Australia have had their pay and conditions of work set by awards handed down by the relevant industrial tribunal, such as the ACAC. This has increased the influence which trade unions have had over employment conditions; with around 50% of employees in unions, they have still been able to effectively control the wages and conditions of around 90% of the workforce, since unions are generally the respondents responsible for negotiating these awards.

Recently, however, the percentage of workers covered by awards has dropped from 85% in 1985 to 80% in 1990 (see Table 4). While most of this fall is accounted for by an increase in the number of managerial, administrative and professional elements of the workforce (who are much less likely to be covered by awards), there has been a fall in the award coverage of ordinary wage and salary earners too (from 90.8% in 1985 to 85.7% in 1990). In any event, the increase in managerial and related workers may in part be a deliberate managerial policy to remove increasing numbers of their employees from award coverage (and union responsibility) by placing them in 'staff' positions.

3.2. The Significance of Non-Standard Employment

The significance of the changes in employment patterns has been the subject of much debate. Deery argues that the shift to less regular forms of employment may be an indicator of employee preference, as much as reflecting a change in employer recruitment habits (Deery, n.d.). Despite the small rise in involuntary part-time employment discussed by Robertson, ABS labour force surveys and Carter's survey of casual employees in the retail industry would tend to support Deery's contention (Carter, 1990; Robertson, 1989). Over 80% of part-time workers were satisfied with the number of hours they worked in 1989 (Sadler and Aungles, 1990, p.294), while two thirds of Carter's survey group, preferred to work the same or less number of hours. A half indicated a preference for casual status (41% preferred to be permanent).

The idea that casuals and part-time workers have less attachment to the workforce is also rejected in Carter's study. He shows that over half the casual workers surveyed in a South Australian study of alternative forms of employment in 1986 are employed on a regular basis, and that over 20% of the part-time workers are permanent employees. The national ABS survey of part-timers showed 30% of part-time workers have permanent employee status.

The larger significance of the increase in non-standard employment lies in what it implies for labour market equity, given that the labour market is becoming more flexible and deregulated. More workers than ever before are now outside the coverage of awards and of trade unions (union density rates have fallen to below 40% from a situation of over 50% density only ten years ago). This raises the spectre of a two-tiered workforce, with a growing number of unprotected, low paid workers (Burgess, 1990).

A more deregulated and flexible labour market also has implications for government economic policy, especially inflation determination. For example, the increasing numbers of non-employees who are outside the centralised wage-fixing system limits the effectiveness of incomes policies. Burgess argues that an insider-outsider model of the labour market may be a more credible model on which to base policy (p. 250).
Perhaps the most important challenges arising from non-standard employment are for the institutions that regulate the labour market, such as unions and the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC, formerly the ACAC). For the latter, the challenge will mainly be reactive, requiring rulings on the status and rights of non-standard employees. But for the former, the issues are fundamental, and relate not just to issues of equity and coverage, but also of industry policy and strategy.

For unions, the increase in non-regular employment presents a major challenge in terms of recruitment, and in terms of bargaining strategy. The recruitment difficulties are familiar and need not detain us here, except to note that unions have yet to show much success in gaining new members from the new workforce emerging in Australia. The huge drop in unionisation rates in the face of massive employment growth throughout the 1980s is testimony to the lack of success of most unions in this area (Berry and Kitchener, 1989).

For unions with large numbers of members in non-regular employment, the problem is especially acute. Such employees pay lower union fees, have less commitment to the union, and often have different objectives to full-time members. A union policy aimed at these workers could be detrimental to their traditional, full-time membership. However, neglect of the growing number of non-standard employees could be just as damaging.

Some of the problems faced by unions in the banking, retail and clothing sectors are outlined in the next section. In particular, we look to see to what extent the increase in flexible employment forms is a direct result of employer strategy, what strategies unions have adopted to meet employer demands, and what impact such union strategies have had. It will become apparent that, as in the case of technological change, union influence has been slight, and sometimes has even exacerbated the situation.

3.3. Industry Case Studies in Numerical Flexibility

(a) Banking

The Australian banking industry has experienced major changes in the past decade that revolve around deregulation, the introduction of new technology, and changes in the organisation of work.

The floating of the Australian dollar, deregulation of the financial sector and, in particular, the entry of foreign banks into the country, has seen banking become a more 'price and service competitive industry' (Manning, 1990, p. 334). This new competition has seen an increase in bank employment of more than 40,000 between 1984 and 1990 to 170,000 employees. The rise in employment has, however, been accompanied by major technological changes and a growth in the part-time workforce, which the bank unions have been unable to prevent.

The main changes in technology have been the introduction of automatic telling machines (ATMs), electronic funds transfer (EFT), and the massive increase in computer-based data processing. This new technology has meant that much of the traditional work of tellers, ledger examiners, general clerks, bill clerks and loan officers, which used to comprise the traditional 'apprenticeship' for a banking career, was made redundant. The emphasis in work for lower level personnel has shifted to the selling of financial products and services. Tellers are now known as 'customer service officers' (Manning, 1990).

This new orientation of telling work no longer guarantees tellers a broad knowledge of branch banking operations that was once seen as essential for a career and promotion. In fact, the career structure of banking employees has changed markedly in the 1980s. Banks
have turned increasingly to lateral recruitment (i.e., university graduates) to fill specialist positions, rather than retraining their own employees (Senate Standing Committee, 1987).

A product of these changes to work content and recruitment policy has been the marked increase in the level of part-time employment. Despite strenuous opposition from the unions, part-time employment was introduced into the major banking award in 1975 (for women only; it was opened to men as well in 1982). Unions saw part-time work as detracting from the notion of a career service and as potentially damaging full-time employment opportunities. However, union opposition has continued to be overridden, and the past decade has witnessed a number of concessions by the unions toward part-time work (Alexander and Frank, 1991).

In 1982, the percentage of part-time officers allowed was increased from 3% to 11% in the branches and 15% in data processing (DP) centres. The figure was further increased to 17.5% of the total workforce in 1987. Figures from the biggest private bank show the proportion of part-time workers increasing from 6.7% of the total workforce in 1984 to 9.6% in 1989, with 20% of all new recruits in the year to September 1990 being part-time (Dunoon and Mathews, 1991).

It is now apparent that a two-tiered workforce has emerged in the banking industry, comprised of a primary sector of almost totally full-time workers with a career path, and a larger, mainly female and part-time secondary sector, with high labour turnover in 'dead-end' jobs in DP centres, clerical and customer service areas, and removed from the traditional career structure (Alexander and Frank, 1991; Dunoon and Mathews, 1991; Markey, 1987).

Union policies have done little to overcome this dualism. After a long period of hostility to part-time workers, based on a fear of losing full-time jobs and an underlying sexism, the banking union concentrated its energies in the mid 1980s on achieving pro-rata salaries and benefits for part-time workers. Initially, its claim was rejected, primarily on the grounds of the restricted duties which part-time officers were allowed to perform - a restriction which the union itself had insisted upon! (Lever-Tracy, 1988) These restrictions were only lifted in 1987 during award restructuring negotiations.

However, the achievement of pro-rata wages and conditions has done very little about the lack of promotional opportunities for part-time workers, since very few jobs in the primary sector are available in part-time mode. Additionally, there are barriers to part-time workers moving into full-time promotional positions, based on a lack of training, information and staff appraisal (Alexander and Frank, 1991).

Alexander and Frank argue that banking now faces a choice between two types of work organisation: one which is increasingly Tayloristic in the branches, waiting for new technology to remove the need for the less skilled jobs; or one which reduces Taylorism, by increasing and broadening the skills and work tasks of its employees through integrating the work of the 'back and front office'. They find more evidence of the first strategy, and are unsure whether the second strategy would necessarily entail a broadening of opportunities for part-time workers, given current management (and union) policies. Dualism seems set to continue.

Dunoon and Mathews' case study of Westpac's attempts to restructure its branch banking operations largely confirms this negative picture. They found that 'career streaming' between operations and customer services streams continues, despite extensive innovation within the streams themselves. Opportunities for training and advancement in the latter stream were less advanced.
(b) Retailing

The retail industry is one of the largest employers of casual, part-time and junior labour in Australia, and is perhaps the clearest example of an industry whose strategy has relied on a deliberate increase in flexible workers.

This strategy has been based on at least four factors (Carter, 1990; Dawkins and Norris, 1990):

(i) the extension of shopping hours to include evening and weekend periods;

(ii) technological change in the past decade in the form of EFT-POS terminals, checkout scanners, and new control technologies in warehousing and storage. This has simplified many work tasks and enabled the large-scale employment of junior, unskilled and generally untrained workers;

(iii) the increased participation rates in education, and the increasing numbers of (especially married) women willing to work on casual and part-time terms; and

(iv) the policies of the main union in retailing (the SDAEA) which have, in some respects, increased the attraction of casual employees. For example, the union has been determined to defend and protect its full-time membership; it won a five-day week for shop assistants in 1971, and has consistently opposed permanent part-time work. This has virtually made inevitable the increase in casual work which has eventuated (Carter, 1990).

Carter's study of the SDAEA has shown that 70% of its membership are now casual or permanent part-time workers (57% casual; 13% permanent part-time) - in 1970, the figure was less than 30%. The vast majority of casuals work part-time; most (68%) are under 21, and most (67%) are women. Dawkins and Norris, in a survey of one retail chain with a deliberate casualisation policy, showed an increase in casual employees between 1984 and 1986 from 40% to 65% of all employees, and an even more marked jump in casual hours from 14% to 36%.

The SDAEA has in general been unable to have a significant impact on the introduction of technology, or in stemming the increase in part-time and casual workers. Its main strategy has been to rely on casual loading (usually of the order of around 15-20% on top of ordinary salaries), as well as penalty rates for work conducted out of ordinary working hours, to discourage employers, but this has failed. Indeed, a decision by the Victorian Industrial Relations Commission in August 1991 cut penalty rates for casual workers, reduced the minimum number of hours of work for part-time and casual workers, and increased the spread of ordinary hours of work for full-time workers in the retail industry (AFR, 1991c).

In more recent years, the SDAEA has concentrated on decasualising the teenage employment in the industry. In 1984 it signed an agreement with six major retailers in NSW which enforced minimum hours of work per shift and per week (4 and 14 hours respectively), which effectively ruled out the employment of most school children. The policy succeeded in reducing the casual workforce by 39%, increased full-time employment by 11% and permanent part-time work by 400% (Lever-Tracy, 1988). However, the agreement was overturned (on application by the employers to the NSW Industrial Commission) in 1986 because of the difficulty employers were having in finding enough people who were willing to work these jobs and hours (Carter, 1990).
This would indicate that the nature of employment and opportunities in the industry is an important reason for the predominance of casual workers. The SDAEA has recognised this very recently in a new agreement signed with a large Japanese retail firm (Daimaru) in a new store which opened recently in Melbourne. This agreement removes most casual and penalty rates for employees, but in return avoids the employment of casual workers, introduces a four-level skill-based career path, team working, and a guarantee of training by the firm (AFR, 1991). 60% of employees are full-time (compared to an average for department stores of 30%), and this figure is likely to increase over time.\(^7\)

Such positive developments, while encouraging, are counterbalanced by other factors. For example, they have no effect on the non-department store area (where most retail workers are employed), which is generally less unionised and where casualisation rates can be as high as 50% (in the take-away food sector, for example).

In addition, there is evidence that major retailers are creating a 'store within a store' by franchising out part of their operation to other firms who are not subject to the same limitations on the numbers of casual workers that can be employed. One of the reasons for this trend is a desire by the stores to reduce their training costs (echoing a point made by Dawkins and Norris). Such franchising out of operations will increase the specialisation of skills, training and product knowledge of workers in the retail industry, and make career paths built around broadly based skills even more difficult to achieve (Sweet, 1990).

(c) Clothing

The clothing industry is one of the few manufacturing industries to have substantial numbers of non-regular employees, mainly in the form of outworkers and sub-contractors. It is a particularly interesting case, as it introduces us to the major themes of the broader flexibility debate discussed in the next section. Specifically, clothing (and the textile, clothing and footwear - TCF - industries in general) represent the traditional form of Australian manufacturing industry - protected, inward-looking, poor management, a failure to develop skills and careers, and with little history of innovation in its products or its production technology. How the clothing industry emerges from the restructuring exercises currently occurring will be a useful indicator of the success of the union push for comprehensive award restructuring.

The clothing industry has been forced to consider restructuring seriously, mainly in the face of two developments: increased competition from imports as a result of reduced tariffs; and increased concentration in the retail industry, which has squeezed margins and put pressure on manufacturers to increase the quality and timeliness of their products (Greig, 1990).

Greig's analysis has shown that in terms of technology, the major clothing firms are generally up to world standards. These manufacturers employ very few sub-contractors or outworkers, mainly for reasons of quality control. Smaller firms, however, including those at the fashion end of the market, are contracting out much more of their work.

This impression is confirmed by Peck in his survey of clothing firms in an inner Melbourne suburb (Peck, 1990). He found that 83% of firms used either sub-contractors or outworkers, with bigger firms being less likely to do so (only 67% of firms with more than 20 employees said that they used such workers). Only 6% of smaller firms used neither form of flexible employment. Peck found 30% of all workers in his sample of firms were

\(^7\)Personal communication with Max Ogden, ACTU official responsible for negotiating the agreement (September 1991).
outworkers; 67% in smaller firms. Allowing for under-reporting, he estimated that outworkers probably accounted for 60% of the factory workforce.

Industry estimates put the figures even higher - with as many if not more outworkers than factory employees in the industry. The outwork population is estimated to have risen from around 10,000 in 1981 to close to 60,000 currently. Peck argues that labour market factors - specifically, the reduced availability of Australian and migrant women from Southern Europe as a result of the poor wages, conditions, training and career prospects in the industry, and the influx of women from South-East Asia who are less easily assimilated into a factory environment - have been as important an influence on this shift in employment as product market factors dealing with the need for quick response times.

The clothing union, CATU, gained award coverage for outworkers (who are now regarded as employees, rather than as self-employed contractors) in 1987, but the impact of this decision has yet to be properly evaluated. Peck feels that there has been some increase in costs and reduction of flexibility in employers' use of outworkers as a result of the award changes, and some of the firms in his sample specifically mentioned the award amendment as a reason for cutting back on outworking. However, the effectiveness of the decision will depend primarily on how effectively CATU can 'police' the award.

CATU has argued forcefully for a fundamental restructuring of the clothing industry. Its Federal Secretary has set three priorities for the industry: to move up-market in its product range; to invest in (flexible) technology; and to overhaul its Tayloristic work organisation (especially the payments-by-results system) and replace it with skills formation, training, career paths and a human-centred work organisation. This includes a consultative style of management as a necessity (Senate Standing Committee, 1989).

Industry leaders responsible for implementing the government's TCF plan have echoed much of this approach, stressing the need to introduce new management practices and technology through consultation and teamwork. However, the industry has been criticised by the Industry Commission and the government recently for its failure to move far enough, fast enough, in restructuring its operations. Greig's analysis of the industry indicates that there has not been a shift in work organisation, even in the bigger manufacturers with new technology equipment, 'suggesting that neo-Fordism rather than post-Fordism is the norm in the industry' (Greig, 1990, p.347). The current pressure from retailers for 'quick response' (similar to Just-in-Time) means that smaller firms will have to either move up-market in their product range, or try to compete on price, which would require them to lower their costs by taking production off-shore and/or by increasing sub-contracting. This appears to tally with Peck's account of the industry in Melbourne.

In essence then, the clothing industry seems to be adopting a strategy which will result in an increasingly segmented workforce. Union policy, although well based and radically different from its previous reliance on the maintenance of tariff levels to protect employment, is yet to have a substantial effect.

3.4. Conclusion

In summary, we can see that at the level of individual industries, a complex interaction of labour supply and demand factors, employer and union strategies, technological possibilities, industrial tribunal rulings, and government policy-induced changes (e.g., deregulation of the financial sector, immigration, increased school retention rates) have seen a significant rise in the number and proportion of numerically flexible employees in Australia in all three industry case studies, in line with the aggregate figures presented earlier in the section.
In these industries, there has been an increase in numerically flexible employment forms within most firms to some extent, but the more significant difference appears to lie between firms within the same industry, with some choosing a numerically flexible employment strategy while others prefer to rely more on a more skilled core workforce. This difference in strategy was especially evident in the clothing and retailing industries.

The pattern of employment also tends to support Lever-Tracy's contention that flexibility follows gender segmentation lines, perhaps reflecting labour supply factors. In manufacturing firms with predominantly male employees, for example, there is less evidence of part-time and casual employment than in traditionally female-dominated industries such as clothing.8

Union strategies to prevent non-standard employment have generally been ineffectual. However, there have been some indications of a more positive and progressive attitude to flexible employees from unions more recently. It is increasingly clear though, that achieving better or pro-rata wages and conditions for flexible employees is insufficient to overcome the inequities they suffer in the labour market in terms of training, skills, and career opportunities. The organisation of work and the associated structure and strategy of industry are the major causes of these more deep-seated inequalities. It is to these factors, and the assault on them by unions in conjunction with the industrial relations system in recent years, that we turn in the next section.

4. THE TRANSFORMATION OF AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS - WORK ORGANISATION TAKES CENTRE STAGE

The past decade has seen important changes in the Australian industrial relations system, with 'a shift in the centre of gravity' from the national level to the workplace (McDonald and Rimmer, 1988). In itself, this is not so remarkable, and is in keeping with developments in other industrialised countries. What is novel, however, is the way in which these changes have been pursued, with a relative lack of confrontation involved, and the active role played in them by the trade union movement (Curtain, 1990a).

In essence, as McDonald and Rimmer have argued, the changes have involved an attempt to integrate decentralised negotiations into national policy. The changes, however, go beyond a shift in the level of bargaining. They also involve a major challenge by the trade union movement to the traditional structures and concerns of Australian industrial relations - including the unions themselves.

In particular, the process known as 'award restructuring', has placed training, skill formation, work organisation and the labour process at the heart of the industrial relations agenda, and put pressure on the union movement (from within its own ranks and from the business community) to alter its traditional, occupational-based structures. The industrial relations system has become focussed on issues concerning work organisation in a way unprecedented under Australia's traditional conciliation and arbitration system. This has occurred primarily through the national wage system, overseen by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC).

In this section of the paper, then, we ask three questions about this transformation of the industrial relations system in Australia: why has it occurred; how has it been attempted; and what results has it achieved?

8 For example, a recent study looking at the employment of young people in advanced technology firms found quite low numbers of casual and part-time workers (Whyte and Probert, 1991).
4.1 The Background to Change

There have been a number of factors influencing and shaping the changes in the industrial relations system in Australia. The most important have been the Accord between the ALP and the ACTU, the performance of the Australian economy, and the fundamental changes which have occurred in trade union attitudes and strategies, which have been partly dependent on these two factors. In addition, the attitudes of the various employer groups have been influential in determining the direction of change, and will also be discussed.

(a) The Accord

The Accord has been the essential backdrop to macro and micro economic policy in Australia since the election of the Hawke Government in 1983 (ALP/ACTU, 1983). Conceived during the recession of the early 1980s, the Accord is a type of social exchange which provides for a number of supportive social policies in return for wage restraint by the trade union movement. Developments in areas such as Medicare, superannuation, equal employment opportunity, taxation, social policy, industry policy, and industrial relations more broadly, have come to be increasingly important to the maintenance of the Accord, as the capacity of the economy to deliver real wage gains has declined with the severe fall in Australia's terms of trade and other problems facing the economy.

In general macro-economic terms, the Accord has had a number of successes in terms of real wage restraint, employment growth, and reduced industrial disputation (Curtain, 1990a). However, the current recession in Australia, combined with the decentralising tendencies in the industrial relations system, are beginning to call into question the capacity of the Accord to 'deliver', at the macro and at the micro level.

Of particular concern to unions is that the Accord's major achievement - record employment growth - has been overturned by the recession, with unemployment returning to 10 per cent of the workforce. Years of real wage cuts have not been accompanied by a revival of Australian industry, and unease is undoubtedly growing as a result (Burgess, 1991; Costa and Duffy, 1991; Stilwell, 1991).

The key point about the Accord, however, has been (and remains) its ability to form a consensual, co-operative environment in which change can occur (Curtain and Mathews, 1990b). Indeed, it has been described as 'a state of mind' as much as a set of institutions and agreements. The Accord relationship has demonstrated an ability by both unions and the government to be flexible in their dealings with each other, and has in fact been renegotiated a number of times since its original signing, in order to reflect changing economic circumstances.

(b) The Economy

The second major factor shaping the new industrial relations has been the performance of the Australian economy, and in particular its internationalisation since the Labor Government came to office in 1983.

Traditionally, Australia has been a primary commodities-based economy, with a highly protected manufacturing sector catering mainly to a small domestic market. A number of studies have highlighted the long-term, structural inadequacies of this balance of production (ACTU/TDC, 1987; AMC, 1990; Curtain, 1990a; Curtain and Mathews, 1990b). Years of protection have resulted in a rigid, unresponsive, inward-looking and uncompetitive economy, with poor management skills, a narrowly educated and skilled workforce, and adversarial, unproductive labour relations.
Government policy since 1983 has markedly increased the competitive pressures on business through such measures as the floating of the exchange rate, deregulation of the financial markets, sharply reducing tariffs and the partial privatisation and 'corporatisation' of many State and Federal government business enterprises. These measures, combined with deteriorating terms of trade for Australia's traditional commodity exports, have resulted in a severe balance of payments deficit, falling real wages, high interest rates, a ballooning national debt and - in short - a sense of economic crisis.

As a consequence of these pressures, a general consensus has emerged between government, employers and unions about the goals of public policy, which have been aimed at converting Australia into an efficient, export-oriented economy, built around value-added production of quality goods and services. The methods by which these goals are to be achieved have, however, been less amenable to widespread agreement. Debate has focussed in particular over the issue of industry policy. Unions in general have favoured a more active approach, with strategic interventions into industry, while government and business have seen promotion of a 'level playing field' as sufficient to encourage the development of efficient industries (Ewer, Higgins and Stevens, 1987).

The general effect of the economic crisis on the major industrial relations actors, however, has been to increase the importance of income generation (in addition to distribution) into their thinking, and to stress the need for fundamental changes to the workplace. This has applied with special force to the union movement, which has been facing a number of challenges, despite its unprecedented influence on policy making at national level.

(c) **New Strategies for the Union Movement**

The trade union movement has, through its Accord with the Hawke Labor Government, been in a position of political and economic influence unknown in any previous period in Australian history (Castle and Hagan, 1987). Yet its own history until the signing of the Accord had shown Australian trade unions to be generally concerned with a narrow range of industrial issues, leaving the political arm of the labour movement (the ALP) to formulate and implement policies on broader social and industrial issues. Recent years, however, have witnessed a sea-change from the traditional defensiveness and 'labourism' of the trade union movement towards a much more pro-active stance termed 'strategic unionism' (ACTU/TDC, 1987). There are several factors that help us to understand the rationale behind this change in union strategy under the Accord.

Of most importance have been the two factors mentioned above: the Accord and the Australian economy. The Accord 'has created the climate for co-operative change. And the need to restructure the economy to improve its long term performance has provided the motivation' (Curtain, 1990a, p. 4).

More importantly, the economic crisis has charged unions with a concern for the process of income and wealth generation, in addition to their traditional interest in distribution (Ogden, 1990). Economic performance has been given such prominence because of the threat which a continuation of current trends was seen to pose - in particular, the changing employment and industrial structures of the Australian economy. De-industrialisation, which hastened during the 1981-2 recession, coupled with the rise of the service sector, has seen union density drop from well over 50% of the workforce in the early 1980s to just over 40% by the end of the decade (Berry and Kitchener, 1989).

The crisis in manufacturing has posed special problems for some of the largest and most important unions, such as the metal unions, who have begun to realise that without a viable manufacturing sector, their own survival is at stake. Consequently, led by the ACTU, the
unions have launched a wide-ranging program of reform aimed at revitalising and restructuring Australian industry and the economy (Ewer, Higgins and Stevens, 1987).

An additional spur to change has been the relative failure of traditional union policies to influence issues such as technological change and non-standard employment (discussed above). Unions have responded by seeking to use industry policy and the wages system to achieve increased participation at the workplace, and to reduce the need for employers to resort to non-standard employment by increasing the skills and (functional) flexibility of their existing, 'core' workforce.

Consequently, the union movement has begun to develop a comprehensive set of policies which integrates its industry policy concerns with the need for changes at the workplace. This strategy had its beginnings in the metal industry with the main metal union, the AMWU. But it reached its height with the publication of *Australia Reconstructed* in 1987 by the ACTU, following a Government sponsored mission to Western Europe (ACTU/TDC, 1987). Since then, a number of other tripartite missions in key industries have reached similar conclusions about the need for comprehensive and cooperative change (DIR/MTFU/MTIA, 1988; FCAI/FVIU, 1989).

Overseas experience proved to be an important part in the re-thinking of union policy. Australia's union structures and policies were strongly influenced by their British origins. But the failure of the British 'social contract' between the Labour Government and the trade unions in the 1970s, and the subsequent destruction wrought upon unions by the Thatcher Government (and their inability to respond), provided Australian trade unions with a salutary lesson about the likely consequences of a 'business as usual' approach (Berry and Kitchener, 1989). Instead, the ACTU looked to Germany and especially Sweden as models of how economic and industrial development could be combined with a strong union movement.

A clear element in the success of these countries was held to be their integrated approach to industry policy, which relied on an active labour market policy, strategic trade, industry and investment policies, a highly skilled workforce, and a co-operative and participative management style which used workers, technology, and modern production and work organisation in order to make high quality, value-added goods which did not rely on low price as their main competitive advantage.

The need to revitalise manufacturing and make it internationally competitive in order to overcome the balance of payments deficit in Australia was a common theme of the report. In essence, the union movement's strategy as expressed in the report required a combination of the following elements: macro-economic policies; wages, prices and incomes; trade and industry; labour market programs; industrial democracy; and strategic unionism. Macro and micro elements were combined into a single over-arching strategy.

*Australia Reconstructed* was a watershed for the ACTU and the union movement:

'For the first time the union movement adopted a comprehensive and completely integrated range of sophisticated policies, which compares with previous approaches where policies were fragmented, even contradictory, usually pigeon holed, and rarely acted upon' (Ogden, 1990, p.18)

In the context of this paper, the micro agenda is the most important. The strategy here involves the following elements (Ogden, 1990, p.10):

- a highly skilled workforce
• modem management techniques
• latest technologies
• new, democratic work organisation and job design
• wage structures compatible with new skills and work organisation
• appropriate industrial relations system

Another important influence on this strategy was an article by the Harvard academic, Wickham Skinner, which argued that there are three main components to increasing productivity and competitive advantage in manufacturing (Skinner, 1986). 40 per cent of advantage comes from long-term planning of manufacturing strategy; 40 per cent from major changes in equipment and process technology, and only 20 per cent (and no more) from narrower, operational cost-reductions. In fact, Skinner argues that too much focus on 'simple' cost reductions is actually harmful and inhibits the realisation of the greater potential gains to be found elsewhere in the enterprise. Skinner has visited Australia and has been freely quoted by leading union officials concerned to see a broader approach to improving manufacturing competitiveness (FVIU, 1991; Harrison, 1986).

Essentially, unions have argued that a broader type of organisational flexibility is required than the type of functional flexibility normally demanded by employers. While increasing the ease with which employers can deploy labour may increase productivity in the short-term, it offers only limited gains and can induce resentment on behalf of the workforce. To realise the workforce's full potential requires highly skilled and motivated employees, which in turn requires participative management, increased job security, and appropriate work organisation and pay structures to encourage the acquisition and utilisation of skills.

To achieve these goals, it was recognised that the union movement's own structures could not be left unattended. The craft and occupational basis of Australian unions had long been recognised as inadequate for a modern economy. Australia has more than 300 unions, most with less than 10,000 members. Such small unions have generally been unable to provide adequate services, research facilities or representation for members, especially at the workplace level. In addition, the proliferation of unions within enterprises has divided the workforce, caused delays and problems for management in introducing workplace change, and discouraged workers from acquiring additional skills, since union demarcation rules restricted the jobs which they could have.

Despite frequent expressions of support for change, however, little in the way of real reform had been achieved before 1987 when the ACTU adopted a policy aimed at rationalising the union movement into 20 'super unions', based largely along industry lines (ACTU, 1987). Since then, and aided by supportive legislation at Federal level easing the requirements for amalgamation, a number of important mergers have taken place, and many more are planned. Procedures have also been put in place to encourage single union bargaining units for existing workplaces, and to ensure single union coverage for greenfield sites.

The policy of union consolidation has not been without its critics from within the trade union movement (especially from occupational unions without a clearly defined industry base, such as the Electrical Trades Union and the Federated Clerks Union) and from business interests concerned at the potential power of these larger industrial unions. Business groups argue instead for enterprise based unions (or indeed, no unions at all, with employers negotiating directly with their employees), to complement the increased enterprise focus of the industrial relations system in general (BCA, 1989; Howard, 1991).

The tensions associated with the devolution of collective bargaining and the structure of the union movement are explored further below, but what is undeniable is that the current wave of union amalgamations, driven by the award restructuring process, has seen the greatest

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shake up of union structures in Australia since the arbitration system was established early this century. It represents perhaps the first ever example in the industrialised world of a union-led attempt to totally transform union structures from an occupationally based system (such as in the UK and the US) to a more industry-based unionism (as in Germany and Sweden).

(d) **Employer Attitudes**

Employer groups in Australia have traditionally been reactive, waiting for unions to make claims on them through the arbitration system, and have generally accepted the system of industry and occupational awards. Since the early 1970s, an increasing number of (especially larger) employers have begun to increase their control over their industrial relations through adopting company and enterprise awards, but they still represent only a minority of private sector employees - Rimmer estimates not much more than 10% (Rimmer, 1989).

However, while employers have been reactive rather than active in shaping the industrial relations system, they have also strongly defended managerial prerogative in managing their own enterprises and workplaces, leaving the arbitration system to concentrate on a narrow range of issues (Plowman, 1988).

Over the past decade, the scope of managerial prerogative has been restricted by legislation on occupational health and safety, equal employment opportunity, and by the TCR decision. In addition, employer groups in general have seen their influence over national wage cases diminish because of the general willingness of the AIRC to accept the various Accord deals negotiated between the Labor Government and the ACTU.

These developments, plus the impact of economic changes such as the floating of the dollar and the lowering of tariffs, have seen renewed employer interest in determining the shape of the industrial relations system (Curtain, 1990a). The main direction which employers have argued for is a decentralisation of bargaining to industry and enterprise level, and an increased focus in wage cases on productivity improvements (and less emphasis on cost-of-living wage adjustments). However, there has been extensive disagreement between employer groups over the form and extent of change which is required. In particular, there are different levels of concern over the likely impact of decentralised bargaining on aggregate wage outcomes (and, related to this, how much control the AIRC should have over enterprise deals), over the role of trade unions in the system, and over how change should be achieved.

The Metal Trades Industry Association (MTIA) is closest to the trade unions in its attitude to reforming the industrial relations system. It has stressed a co-operative and comprehensive approach to reforming the Metal Industry Award, and favours a larger role for the AIRC in overseeing enterprise bargaining, fearing the ability of industry and occupational based unions to achieve a 'flow on' of wage rises from one enterprise to another, on the basis of widely held notions of comparative wage justice among the workforce (Evans, 1989).

Contrasted to the MTIA's position is that of the so-called 'New Right', which consists of employers in the trade exposed sectors such as mining and agriculture, plus smaller businesses unable to easily pass on cost increases (Berry and Kitchener, 1989; Bramble, 1989). These employers - of whom the most celebrated is the Robe River iron ore mine - oppose unions and what they regard as 'the industrial relations club' of unions, protected industries and the AIRC. Instead, they argue for the use of the common law against unions, and adopt a much more confrontationist approach to industrial relations. Their policies have not been widely adopted by employers or governments, but their influence has been felt
indirectly in that much of the developments of the past five years have been in response to the threat of a New Right industrial relations agenda being imposed on unions.

A more sophisticated and increasingly influential employer approach is held by the Business Council of Australia, which has espoused a strong shift to an enterprise bargaining system (BCA, 1989, 1991). This requires a number of reforms - changes to union and award structures to focus on the enterprise; reducing the role of the AIRC (by offering a 'two track' system, in which some employers could bypass the AIRC if they wish, while others remain within the centralised award system), and changing the industrial disputes system to one based on fixed-term commitments during which strikes would not be allowed.

The Confederation of Australian Industry has largely adopted an approach supportive of the centralised system (while arguing against cost-of-living wage increases), but has recently changed its position to one where it opposes the granting of generalised wage increases in national wage cases (AFR, 1991b).

In general, then, employers have been divided over the types of change which they would like to see occur in the industrial relations system, although they have generally been united in their opposition to generalised wage increases and in favour of a more productivity-based, enterprise focussed system in response to increasing competitive pressures. These divisions have allowed the ACTU more control over the direction of change in the labour market than might otherwise have been expected, given the deregulation of other areas of the economy. However, with the push towards more decentralised industrial relations, divisions between employers are beginning to lessen (witness the shift in policy of the CAI), and they are assuming greater influence over the nature of change.

4.2 Facilitators of Change - the AIRC and the Federal Labor Government

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC, formerly the ACAC) appears at first sight to be an unlikely facilitator of change. The traditional view of the arbitration system - which the AIRC oversees - has been that it has produced a system of 'structured irresponsibility' into industrial relations in Australia (Curtain, 1990a, p. 2).

By centralising bargaining structures, perpetuating the occupational basis of awards and unions, and insisting on standardised, generalised award conditions, the Commission took away any onus on the industrial actors lower down the system to take responsibility for their actions. The occupational basis of the system meant that external labour markets dominated in Australia, with little opportunity or incentive to create career paths within a firm or industry built around skill. Labour turnover was high; employee loyalty and concern for an enterprise's performance was limited; work classifications were narrow and restrictive; and the existence of many unions and awards in each workplace reduced management's ability and incentive to achieve fundamental workplace change to take advantage of new technology or changing market conditions (Curtain, 1990a).

However, through the mechanism of the National Wage Case, the AIRC has begun to alter this situation, and shown that it can facilitate change to enhance flexibility and responsiveness in the workplace, as an essential step towards the restructuring of the Australian economy. In particular, it has established a link between the wages system and economic performance which involves both macro and micro elements.
The National Wage System

During the period of the conservative Fraser government, wage indexation under the centralised system did not keep pace with inflation, while the total 'social wage' (i.e., allowing for health care costs, taxation, social security payments, etc.) also declined. The recession of the early 1980s drastically cut employment in the metal industry, and coincided with a large wage rise and cut in working hours which had been won through over-award bargaining by the strong metal workers' union. By contrast, the Accord promised that in return for a commitment by government to support full inflation-linked wage rises for all workers, unions would make a 'no-extra claims' commitment, precluding over-award bargaining.

This system remained in place for the first two years of the Accord. However, economic conditions, and particularly the depreciation of the currency and the severe drop in the terms of trade, led to a renegotiating of the Accord. The National Wage Case in late 1985 discounted the full inflation indexed wage rise due to unions in order to account for the effects of the depreciation. In addition, however, the unions' claims for a productivity based wage increase (part of the original Accord) was converted into an employer contribution to superannuation, to be negotiated over time at industry, company and occupational levels.

The decision introduced two new developments into the national wage system: wage outcomes (i.e., the superannuation element of the wage rise) were directly related to productivity; and industry and company level negotiations (on superannuation) - without recourse to the Commission for arbitration - were introduced to the industrial relations system.

The decentralised direction of national wage case decisions gathered pace after this decision, reflecting economic conditions and demands from the major parties to the system - the unions, the employers, and the government.

The March 1987 decision ended the semi-automatic wage indexation of the previous four years with a new, two-tiered system. The first tier consisted of an automatic flat payment of $10 per week for all workers, while a second increase of up to four per cent was made available on the basis of agreements being reached between employers and unions on cost-neutral productivity improvements. These agreements were to be negotiated at industry and workplace levels, and were judged by the Commission on the basis of what was referred to as the Restructuring and Efficiency (R&E) Principle. This principle essentially allowed wage rises in the second tier on the basis of measures being implemented in the following areas:

- changes to work practices and changes to management practices as an integral part of an exercise conducted in accordance with this principle;
- other initiatives, including action to reduce demarcation barriers, advance multi-skilling, training and re-training, and broadbanding; and
- changes to work patterns which may also be necessary. (ACAC, 1987)

The influence of the union movement's agenda is evident in these principles, with the emphasis on management as well as work practices, and training and retraining in association with any reduction in demarcation barriers.

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\[9\] Much of the material for this section comes from Curtain, 1990a.
The wage case in August 1988 extended the R&E principle even further, through the Structural Efficiency Principle (SEP). This awarded a three per cent wage rise to unions who gave formal undertakings to co-operate positively in implementing the new system; a further $10 flat rate was available six months later for parties who could demonstrate progress. Again, the parties were required to reach agreements between themselves before getting them ratified by the Commission.

The principles of the 1988 decision provided for a fundamental review of awards with a view to implementing measures to improve the efficiency of industry and 'provide workers with access to more varied, fulfilling and better paid jobs' (ACAC, 1988, p. 6). Measures to be considered included:

- establishing skill-related career paths which provide an incentive for workers to continue to participate in skill formation;
- eliminating impediments to multi-skilling and broadening the range of tasks which a worker may be required to perform;
- creating appropriate relativities between different categories of workers within the award and at enterprise level; and
- ensuring that working patterns and arrangements enhance flexibility and the efficiency of the industry. (ACAC, 1988)

The SEP has been in operation since, with variations related to the amount and timing of wage increases available to workers under the system. The process involved has come to be known as 'award restructuring', as a major objective and effect of the SEP has been to overhaul the industrial awards governing the wages and conditions of the workforce, in order to bring them into line with the new type of work organisation, skills and wages system implied by the SEP.

The union movement's agenda is even more prominent under the SEP. In particular, its broader interpretation of flexibility within the workplace ('functional flexibility') is evident in the notion of 'skill formation', which has become central to the process of reform. This involves the provision of vertical career paths (with a smaller number of skill-based wage levels, rather than the myriad of narrow job and wage classifications currently in force), backed up by appropriate training. This vertical approach to the skill formation of employees is an essential addition to the more typical 'multi-skilling' agenda, which often involves only a horizontal breaking down of demarcation lines across similar skill levels.

In September 1989, the AIRC included the so-called 'page 10 agenda' as part of its review of the SEP (AIRC, 1989), in response to complaints by employers at the slowness of achieving real productivity gains from the award restructuring process. It reverted back to a narrower view of flexibility by stipulating a number of additional items which could be included in SEP negotiations. These included measures such as penalty rates, overtime arrangements, variations in the arrangement of the hours of work, annual leave, sick leave, part-time and casual employment, paying wages by electronic funds transfer, and manning levels. Only the inclusion of an item arguing for the development of appropriate consultative procedures could be seen as part of the union agenda (Curtain and Mathews, 1990b).

Since the September 1989 decision, the wages system has been faced with increasing demands for change towards a greater enterprise focus, while maintaining the structural efficiency principles and award restructuring as the basis for change. However, the smooth
passage of the Accord agreements made between the ACTU and the Government has received a number of setbacks.

The most recent Accord (known as Accord VI), was negotiated in February 1990, a month before elections in which the Labor Government was narrowly returned to office. It was similar to previous packages, allowing for a combination of wage increases, tax cuts and improvements in superannuation. It differed from previous packages in three key areas, however (Plowman, 1991).

First, it provided for part of the wage rise to be in the form of a generalised increase for all workers, based on the cost-of-living, thus revitalising earlier Accord principles and softening the productivity-based thrust of wages policy since the inception of the second tier in 1987. Second, it allowed for over-award payments at enterprise level based on improvements in productivity and profitability, thus departing from the 'no extra claims' commitments required by the AIRC of the unions since 1983, and suggesting that the ACTU - rather than the AIRC - would be responsible for ensuring an overall wages ceiling. And third, in the face of employer opposition over elements of the claim (especially the generalised wage rise, the superannuation claim, and the profitability criterion included in enterprise bargaining) and likely AIRC opposition to its loss of control over aggregate wage outcomes, the ACTU urged unions to serve claims for Accord VI directly on employers 'in the field', and to seek ratification of the claim through the Commission later.

The Accord VI strategy was thrown into doubt by subsequent events. The recession reduced the ability of unions to secure agreements directly with employers, although the ACTU claimed that its strategy was generally on course. More seriously, the AIRC in its April 1991 national wage decision rejected the three main claims put by the ACTU. It turned down its call for a general $12 wage rise, granting instead a 2.5% increase conditional on progress on SEP. It rejected the planned increases in superannuation, calling for a conference to discuss the issue. And, most importantly, it allowed no increases on the basis of enterprise bargaining, judging that 'the parties to industrial relations have still to develop the maturity necessary for the further shift of emphasis now proposed' (AIRC, 1991). This was a stinging rebuff not just to the Accord partners, but to employer groups as well, who were generally in favour of the shift to enterprise bargaining.

By late October 1991, however, the AIRC performed an about face and sanctioned a move towards unrestricted enterprise bargaining without wage ceilings (AFR, 1991d). The Commission adopted a new principle allowing unlimited wage rises to be negotiated between unions and employers in return for improved productivity at the enterprise. The AIRC will conciliate in disputes but not arbitrate, thus putting the onus on the parties to reach agreement. In addition, the AIRC placed a number of important conditions on the negotiations:

• agreements must be negotiated through all unions in an enterprise (or section of an enterprise) acting together as a single bargaining unit;

• agreements must be for a fixed term;

• agreements must not involve reductions in workers' ordinary time earnings or departures from AIRC standard hours of work, annual leave or long service leave entitlements.

Thus the Commission has placed a 'floor' of minimum conditions which agreements cannot breach, which answers one of the union movement's main concerns about unfettered enterprise bargaining. In addition, the Commission also rejected employer calls for future
general wage rises to be ruled out, and will consider this issue when the ACTU makes a claim next year.

The decision has been widely hailed by the Government, employers and unions alike, as renewing the momentum of the SEP, which had stalled following the April wage decision. Only the Liberal-National Party opposition coalition has rejected the latest decision, arguing that it does not allow for true enterprise bargaining because of the stress it gives to the role of unions in the negotiation of agreements. The coalition prefers a system allowing for direct negotiation between employers and employees.

The coalition position on the place of unions in the industrial relations system, and the broader debate over wages policy (both the issue of generalised wage rises and the question of the aggregate wage outcome), are likely to be key issues in industrial relations in Australia in the future. In New South Wales, the conservative state government has introduced legislation similar to that espoused at Federal level, attacking union rights and reducing various award conditions, which has provoked widespread condemnation from the union movement and culminated in a one day state-wide general strike against the legislation. The contrast between the NSW confrontationist approach to reform and the more consensual based methods of the AIRC and Federal Government is quite marked (AFR, 1991a).

(b) Supportive Government Policies

Along with the changes engendered by the AIRC, the other important catalyst and facilitator of change in the industrial relations system has been the Federal Government itself, which has provided support for reform in a number of ways, and reinforced the consensus-based and participative approach to change demanded by the trade union movement.

Areas where government policy has been influential in this regard include:

• **training**: Federal Parliament passed the Training Guarantee Act in 1990 which requires firms with a payroll of $200,000 or more (about eight employees) to spend a minimum of 1% of payroll on eligible training for employees (rising to 1.5% of payroll from 1992-3), or else to pay any shortfall to the Tax Office. Training must be structured and work related. The measure is designed to increase industry's own expenditure on training, which studies have shown to be poor by international standards (Curtain, Krbavac and Stretton, 1986), and complements the increased attention given to skill formation required by award restructuring;

• **workplace change**: the Government has established a number of programs to support firms and unions in implementing workplace change. These include industrial democracy grants; the establishment of a number of Workplace Resource Centres around the country which can act as independent facilitators of change in individual enterprises; and a $25 million Best Practice Demonstration Program to accelerate the spread of best practice reforms and an improved workplace culture (DPMC, 1991);

• **industry plans**: a number of 'mature' industries have been the subject of substantial tariff cuts and increased competition. To ease the restructuring process, government assistance in a number of affected industries -such as such as steel, motor vehicles, heavy engineering, shipping, stevedoring, and textile clothing and footwear - has been provided for training, labour redeployment and investment finance. In return, recipients have had to commit themselves to invest and adopt participative management and work structures. Teamwork, skill development, and consultative procedures were an integral part of the plans, although the more fully developed skill-based broad-banded wage and career system
was not undertaken in most cases, as these concepts developed later. Government support for tripartite missions to study developments overseas often accompanied such plans;

- other legislation: in addition to the Training Guarantee Act, the government has provided other legislative support for industrial relations reform through the Industrial Relations Act 1988, which has made union mergers easier and also increased the opportunities for employers to enter into enterprise agreements with unions and employees.

4.3 Impact to Date

How effective have the changes outlined above been in transforming workplace bargaining and work organisation? We look firstly at the second-tier negotiations before turning to progress under the SEP/award restructuring process at industry and enterprise levels.

(a) The Second Tier

The impact of the second tier (or R&E Principle) has been subject to different interpretations. It involved a mix of industry and enterprise based negotiations, and at both levels a combination of numerical, functional and procedural flexibility issues (Rimmer and Zappala, 1988).

Rimmer and Zappala's analysis of twelve major federal awards showed that most award negotiations over the R&E Principle were conducted at industry level, with a concentration on items of numerical flexibility (such as arrangement of working hours and leave, etc.). Only the metal industry adopted an extensive enterprise-based reform program, in association with industry-level negotiations. Over 1800 enterprise agreements were concluded under the second tier, with negotiations being guided by the AIRC and including elements of the AMWU's broader agenda of industry planning and career and skill development, as well as more typical management concerns regarding the flexibility of labour deployment (See Table 5). The union also prevented award conditions from being considered outside of industry level negotiations.

A survey of these agreements showed that while most enterprises had experienced change through the second tier, very few adopted the comprehensive approach favoured by the unions. Instead, a fairly narrow concentration on various cost-cutting elements tended to predominate, much along the lines suggested by Skinner's 'productivity paradox'. Interestingly, firms involved in the government-sponsored Heavy Engineering Plan were more likely to undergo comprehensive review of their practices (Curtain, 1990a).

The overall impression of the second-tier approach is two-fold. On the one hand, it was seen by most observers as a step forward in forcing the industrial partners to focus on enterprise level change, which had always been weak in the Australian system. On the other hand, the narrow, cost-cutting, 'trade-off' mentality of most employers was resented by unions and workers, and made them suspicious of similar exercises in the future. Only where workplace union structures were strong enough to introduce the broader agenda of the peak union bodies, as in the metal industry (where shop steward organisation has always been stronger), was there a challenge to this pattern. Consequently, the award restructuring process, which promised a much broader agenda and was specifically designed not to be carried out with a narrow, cost-cutting focus (Curtain and Mathews, 1990b), was seen as a decided advance.

(b) SEP and Award Restructuring

The award restructuring process is on-going, and it is difficult to offer a judgement yet of its achievements. Like the second tier, its success and progress varies across sectors and firms.
Here, we give an outline of developments, firstly by looking at a number of key sectors and secondly, and more tentatively, by discussing the limited survey and anecdotal evidence of changes under the SEP at enterprise level.

i. Developments in Key Industries and Sectors

The tripartite industry plans for those industries under pressure from reduced tariffs and increased international competition were introduced before the major changes in the industrial relations system resulting from the second tier and the SEP, but reform has been on-going in most cases, and incorporated changes into the award restructuring process. They provide an interesting insight into the possibilities of a more cooperative approach to industry development and workplace organisation. In addition, the public sector has been under great pressure to reform and become more productive, in response to limits on public spending, threats of privatisation, and demands from an increasingly exposed private sector for improved performance from public sector agencies which influence the investment and business environment.

Metals and Engineering

The metals and engineering industry, through its principle award (the Metal Industry Award), has always been the pacesetter in industrial relations in Australia. The Metal Industry Award is the largest private sector award in Australia, determining employment conditions for over 400,000 workers in approximately 10,000 establishments (Plowman, 1990). The metals industry has also had the most organised and militant unions, and has had a history of bitter industrial conflict and low trust workplace relations.

The metal industry, however, has also been the leader in attempts to transform industrial relations in Australia since 1983. Only a brief summary of the changes that have taken place can be given here, but it is fair to say that in many respects it has become the 'model' for attempts to reform work organisation, skills, training and workplace relations.

Reform in the metal industry began in 1986 with a proposed 'compact' with the unions by the employer association, the MTIA. Subsequently, extended negotiations over the second tier and the SEP have resulted in an overhauling of the old award, and major changes to the organisation of work and industrial relations procedures in the industry. The changes in general comprise three types:

• a new job and wage classification structure: pay levels have been tied to a fourteen level, skill-based career path in place of the old award's rigid structure of over 340 narrowly defined classifications and 1800 different rates of pay. These classifications are defined in terms of generic skills (see Table 6), levels of responsibility and leadership capacity, and are built around three broad 'streams' (fabrication, mechanical and electrical/electronic), with provision for cross-skilling between streams as well as promotion within single streams. As Curtain and Mathews argue, the principle of linking wages to the skill level of work 'is the key micro-level reform that drives the entire award restructuring process' (1990b, p.11), and has been duplicated (with suitable variations) across most awards. Accompanying the new classifications is a new training structure (supported by a new training board which is setting national standards of competence), which enables the career path to work;

10 Much of the following discussion is based on Curtain, 1990a and Plowman, 1990.
provision for consultation: improved consultation had already been apparent at industry level through negotiations over the second tier and the findings of the tripartite overseas mission in 1988 (DIR/MTFU/MTIA, 1988). The new award extends this approach to the enterprise level and states that 'at each plant or enterprise, an employer, the employees and their relevant union or unions shall establish a consultative mechanism and procedures appropriate to the size, structure and needs of that plant or enterprise'. In addition, the award allows for the establishment of a training committee which should be constituted by equal numbers of employer and employee representatives;

increased flexibility: the second tier negotiations introduced a number of changes to flexibility issues such as payment by electronic funds transfer, rostered days off, leave arrangements, overtime, tea breaks, etc. It also resulted in the provision for part-time employment of males in the industry for the first time. The new award extends the flexibility agenda, enabling changes to occur to meal breaks, the spread of hours, annual leave, etc. Changes in these conditions must have the agreement of the relevant union(s) and a majority of employees affected by the change, and will be subject to AIRC approval; however, the union shall not unreasonably oppose any agreement. In addition, the new skill-based classification structure has increased the potential flexibility of work organisation by giving the employer the right 'to direct an employee to perform such duties and use tools and equipment as are within the employee's skill, competence and training'. This potentially makes demarcation a purely skills-based phenomenon, rather than being the outcome of job ownership struggles between workers and unions.

The new provisions were inserted into the award in March 1990, and are still in their early stages. Most attention since then has been centred on establishing training and skill standards, as well as the broader debate about the wages system. Both MTIA and the unions favour a controlled decentralisation of the wages and bargaining system through the AIRC; the employers out of fear of wage flow ons from strongly organised workplaces to weaker ones, and the unions for traditional egalitarian and ideological reasons. In the most recent wage decision of October 1991, the parties presented a deal limiting enterprise bargaining pay rises to 4.5%.

Evidence of actual progress in firms under the new metal award and the SEP is patchy, as it is in most other industries. The second tier showed a high proportion of firms aiming at narrow flexibility improvements. However, firms involved in the Heavy Engineering Plan were shown to have undergone more comprehensive changes in terms of work organisation and to have had the greatest success (Curtain, 1990a). The recent impasse over Accord VI appears to have slowed the momentum of change in the industry, while the recession has weakened the unions' bargaining strength against narrow cost-cutting efforts by employers and reduced the effectiveness of an earlier commitment by the MTIA which states positively that award restructuring is not a vehicle for job shedding (MTIA/MTFU, 1989).

Overall, though, the change in industrial relations in the metal industry has been remarkable, if not as smooth as the resultant agreements might indicate. There have been threatened and actual national strikes in the industry over different issues, and the unions have had to fight hard for their broader agenda to be given prominence over the more limited, flexibility-driven aims of the employers. The result has been a compromise between the consultation and skills formation concerns of the unions in return for the increased labour flexibility favoured by employers. At the same time, disputes between unions - on political and skill lines - always
have the potential to threaten the implementation of the new award structure. But in
general, the coalition of interest between the unions and employers in the face of increased
competition (and with the experience of the 1982 recession - which followed a bitter
industrial campaign - still uppermost in industry and union leaders' minds) is likely to force
the parties to keep trying to reach agreement.

Motor Vehicles

Like the metals industry, the vehicle industry has had a poor history of industrial relations
and work organisation, and has been subject to even greater competitive pressures through
lower tariffs arising from the government's car plan. It also has possibly less capacity at an
industry level to overcome its problems (i.e., branch plant status, too many producers for a
small market, large migrant workforce, low skills base, etc.).

Guided by the Federal Government's car plan, however, things have begun to change. A
tripartite mission to Japan, the US, Sweden and Germany highlighted the difference between
best practice overseas and the typical Australian vehicle manufacturer. The mission made a
number of recommendations, similar in spirit to those in the metals industry, urging for
reform of work organisation, increased labour flexibility, devolution of more responsibility
to the shopfloor, more attention to training and skill formation and improved communication
between management and unions (FCAJ/FVU, 1989).

Building on agreements already reached under the second tier, major SEP agreements were
signed in late 1989 at both Ford and Nissan (the vehicle firms tend to company rather than
industry agreements), which have sharply reduced the number of job classifications and
increased job mobility and enlargement, in return for increased training and a commitment by
the firms to a new, skills-based wages classification system. Unlike the metal industry
model, which is centred around the tradesperson, the career path is based on a new Vehicle
Industry Certificate as the initial aim for all non-trades employees in the industry. This gives
non-trades workers a much greater stake in the skill formation process than previously, as
Australia's training system has generally been geared towards trade apprentices (Curtain and
Mathews, 1990a).

Late in 1990, nine working parties consisting mainly of rank and file union members were
formed (with employer support) and a consolidated report produced, which set out the
unions' strategy for the vehicle industry (FVIU, 1991). The report contained a number of
recommendations aimed both at industry development measures and at the organisation of
work and industrial relations within the industry. In particular, it based its report on the
'Skinner formula' about the sources of manufacturing-based competitive advantage - i.e.,
that only 20% comes from a narrow cost-reduction approach while most comes from long-
term changes in manufacturing structure, approaches to materials and workforce
management, and major changes in equipment and process technologies.

The unions proposed measures to reduce absenteeism and labour turnover, to improve
quality, safety, work organisation, training, industrial relations and communications, in
addition to a series of industry development measures. In a wide ranging document, the
unions suggested a willingness to enter into two or three year fixed agreements with
employers, and to move towards a single industry union.

11For example, the left wing AMWU (now merged with the draughting and supervisors' union to become the
MEWU) and FIMEE, the new right wing union arising from the merger of the FIIA (process workers) and the ASE (a
smaller trades based union), have always had uneasy relationships. In addition, the craft-based Electrical Trades
Union has been very wary about the extent of multi-skilling across trade streams implied in the new award.
Evidence of the positive reception of the strategy by employers was soon apparent when Toyota announced in August 1991 its intention to invest in a major new plant, based on the commitment of the vehicle unions to a new industrial relations regime as outlined in the report (AFR 1991g).

**Steel**

The steel industry was the subject of the first of the Hawke Government's tripartite industry plans, offering government financial support in return for industry commitment to no retrenchments for five years and an $800 million investment plan in upgrading technology, while unions committed themselves to not pursue wage claims outside the centralised system and to review work practices and demarcation. The initial plan has proved successful from both an industry development and an industrial relations point of view, and a further agreement between unions and management has extended the employment security provision and introduced a major focus on skills upgrading, retraining, cross-skilling, consultation, new work organisation and a new award (Ogden, 1990).

**Maritime Industries**

The maritime sector is vitally important for an island economy like Australia, and much attention has been focussed on its notoriously low productivity and poor industrial relations record. Major reforms have occurred in both shipping and stevedoring.

In shipping, a series of government-sponsored inquiries and programs have seen major reductions in crewing levels, a voluntary redundancy scheme, broadbanding of jobs, reduced demarcation and increased team working, the creation of a new career path and training programs, and a reduction in the number of unions from seven to three (soon to be two, as a merger is imminent) (AFR 1991f; DIR, n.d). Through the Shipping Industry Reform Authority, financial incentives for new ships crewed at the new level were introduced by the government, and there has been substantial new investment in the industry.

In the stevedoring industry, progress has been slower and more controversial. However, new agreements were in place by the second half of 1991, which have seen large redundancies (in agreement with the union) in return for the establishment of a career path and training for the remaining workforce, increased consultation procedures and an increased enterprise focus for a workforce which has traditionally seen itself as belonging to the industry as a whole (AFR 1991h).

While progress has been slow (the initial waterfront reform process was set into motion in 1989), it has been achieved without industrial disputes, and shows the value of a consultative approach to change.

**The Public Sector**

The introduction of industrial democracy measures into the Federal Public Service has already been mentioned. In addition, there has been a wide range of other reforms aimed at reducing hierarchical structures, improving the position of women and minority groups, and decentralising authority from the Public Service Board to agency heads. The second tier and the SEP have witnessed further change to work organisation.

A major exercise has involved the restructuring of the clerical, keyboard and administrative grades, covering some 73,000 employees, most of whom are women (Curtain, 1990a; Rimmer and Zappala, 1988). Previously inflexible, inefficient, demarcation-ridden structures have been overhauled and a new classification structure introduced. This structure
has reduced the number of classifications from 93 levels to 8, and salary points from 180 to just 43. Functional flexibility and career progression has been encouraged, especially for employees formerly restricted to keyboard work. Integration of keyboard, clerical and administrative work has been central to the reforms, and as a result typing and word processing pools have been virtually eliminated and author keying has increased. Participative job redesign, often assisted by specially trained facilitators, has eased the process of change.

An example of change under the process is the experience of the Australian Tax Office (ATO). The ATO claimed by early 1990 to have redesigned 90% of administrative service officers’ jobs, reducing the extreme fragmentation in work such as the processing of tax returns. A major new computer investment has had strong union input in selecting the equipment, establishing ergonomic standards and continuing the participative job design process (Curtain, 1990a).

A different example of reform in the public sector comes from Australia Post (AP), which until recently had a terrible history of industrial confrontation and union resistance to the introduction of new technology. Studies of the introduction of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology into AP (Carr, 1991; Mathews, 1991) have shown a vastly improved picture as a result of a highly participative process in the introduction of the new technology. Progressing through the various stages of the second tier and the SEP to reach a Joint Statement of Understanding between unions and management, assisted by an overseas visit to other postal services using OCR, and aided by regular industrial participation training sessions, the technology has been commissioned and introduced without disputation, and in a manner which enhances skills, training, careers, job satisfaction and efficiency.

The postal union, the APTU, has had a major involvement from the outset in all issues concerning OCR, including the selection of technology as well as its implementation through job design processes12. Mathews considers the Australia Post experience with OCR to be a model for successful change, the key features of which are participation, devolution of responsibility, piloting of the introduction of the technology, and continuous review of its progress. In addition, an essential prerequisite for change was that job security for existing workers was guaranteed at the outset - although natural attrition and voluntary early retirement schemes will mean a net loss in jobs overall. Mathews argues that AP’s introduction of OCR is ‘a classic case of technological change accelerating a process of organisational change’ and is ‘one of the great success stories of organisational innovation in Australia today’ (Mathews, 1991, p.80).

ii. Indicators of Progress at Enterprise Level

It is more difficult to ascertain the extent of progress under the SEP at enterprise as opposed to industry level, due to the greater variability between firms. In addition, most of the early award restructuring process was aimed at the industry level (except in the metal industry, to some extent), and therefore enterprise level reforms have had less time to be implemented.

A survey conducted in April 1990 gives some indication (see Table 7), although the authors noted that their sample was biased towards larger firms in manufacturing and mining who are more likely to have made progress under the principles (Sloan and Wooden, 1990). This study revealed that action under the SEP was slow to begin until the 1989 wage case, which introduced the 'page 10' agenda and also made future wage increases dependent on

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12E.g., following the overseas mission and concerns raised by the APTU, it was decided not to invest in video coding machinery (Mathews, 1991).
demonstrated progress in the implementation of change. Two major findings of the survey were firstly, the high degree of involvement by workplace management and union delegates in negotiations, indicating a shift to lower levels of bargaining; and secondly, the wide range of issues which were discussed in comparison to past practice, such as under the second tier.

The survey found more extensive agreement on 'functional flexibility' issues such as broadening the range of tasks performed by workers, and reduced job classifications and demarcations. Longer-term measures such as new skills-based career paths and new training arrangements were also well represented (over 60% of workplaces for the new career paths).

Agreement on numerical flexibility provisions, perhaps surprisingly, were less prominent, although they tended to have been implemented more quickly. This may have been due to many such items having already been agreed to under the Second Tier. Procedural mechanisms for negotiating change were also prominent in the agreements.

A later article by the same authors shows that the key factors in achieving agreement and change are the existence of bargaining structures focussed on the enterprise (such as enterprise awards or single union bargaining units); high quality management; and an environment of rapid technical change and competitive pressure. The presence of unions had little impact either way, except to ensure that the 3% SEP payment was received early. Also, the benefits accruing to the enterprise from implementing change were higher in a multi-union environment. Another interesting finding was that workplaces with a mainly female workforce were less likely to have made much progress under the SEP (Wooden and Sloan, 1990).

Another indicator of the impact of SEP on enterprises was a series of 16 case studies carried out in April-May 1990 (Rimmer and Verevis, 1990). These studies were also of large, BCA firms in a number of different industry sectors. The results indicated different patterns of response and progress, with four main types identified:

• enterprise-level bargaining - substantial progress;
• enterprise-level bargaining - little or no progress;
• industry level bargaining with strong unionised workplaces complicating change; and
• industry level bargaining with strong management having a virtual free hand at the workplace with minimal negotiations with unions.

Companies responded to the challenge of SEP with different strategies. Some (such as the road transport industry) stressed numerical flexibility, others (e.g., construction) both numerical and functional flexibility (through cross-skilling only). Some attempted greater flexibility but failed in the face of union resistance and lack of head office support. Curtain argues that the existence of internal or external labour market strategies is a key determinant of the type of SEP approach taken, with firms having internal or enterprise-linked external labour markets being able to produce greater change. The existence of a purely external labour market reduces employers' incentive and ability to introduce skill related career paths, and engenders efforts to lower costs directly in a low trust industrial relations situation (Curtain, 1990b).

Firms with more enterprise focus (through simpler union and award bargaining structures), those facing greater competitive pressure, and those with more participative management styles, tended to progress the furthest (Rimmer and Verevis, 1990).
The key factor, however, in those cases where SEP had progressed further was in virtually all cases the ability of management, and especially plant management, to take positive responsibility for change. Without a management 'vision' and a 'champion' committed to change, consultation and participation risk becoming directionless, engendering frustration and cynicism in the workforce (Curtain, 1990b).

Another overview of progress under SEP has been given by an ACTU official responsible for much of the award restructuring agenda (Ogden, 1991). At the 1991 ACTU Conference, he expressed that he was relatively pleased with progress so far. Hundreds of Joint Consultative Committees have been established, most awards have been restructured along skills-based career path lines, and unions were beginning to show more interest in job redesign as a prelude to training, thereby putting the total work organisation under the microscope rather than becoming locked into performing skills audits too early in the process. Again, he felt that a lack of management vision and skill was the main stumbling block to the positive development of award restructuring, and expressed a need for unions to keep control of the SEP agenda.

4.4 Conclusion - Change at all Levels of Bargaining

Clearly then, the wages and industrial relations system have undergone fundamental changes since the original Accord was signed. Broadly, the system has evolved from a highly centralised system into a more decentralised framework, while retaining a 'public interest' orientation through the national and industry framework of the principles (Curtain, 1990a). Change has occurred at all four levels of bargaining:

• at the national level, the agenda for bargaining has been widened to include previously unconsidered items (such as training and superannuation). It has been more co-operative than in previous adversarial national wage cases, and included a strong micro component in the deliberations of all parties. However, there is tension over the relative weight to be given to macro wage policy concerns and using wage policy to stimulate micro level reform;

• at industry level, there have been a range of changes through the industry plans and award restructuring processes. Some industries - metals, steel, vehicles, maritime, parts of the public sector - have undergone major transformations in their industrial relations, aided by industry plans, a pre-existing awareness of the problems facing industry and the need for reform. Other industries facing less competition or technological change have not had the same incentive to reform their awards or work organisation and practices;

• at enterprise level, there has been a shift towards more enterprise awards since the early 1970s. However, many of these supplement industry awards; and Rimmer estimates that only 10% of employees are covered by comprehensive enterprise awards (Rimmer, 1991). These awards tend to set out in detail elements of numerical and functional flexibility; a minority have adopted the broadly based, skill-pay linked career path favoured by the ACTU, involving a participative and teamwork approach. Few firms have taken up the possibilities offered by the Industrial Relations Act of 1988, which allow for special enterprise agreements to be made and ratified by the AIRC. Evidence from surveys and case studies indicate that SEP is having variable effects across firms;

• at workplace level, dilutions of managerial prerogative through the TCR decision and new occupational health and safety legislation have already been referred to. The second tier negotiations under the R&E principle, and the ongoing award restructuring process, have continued the decentralised shift in focus of Australian industrial relations, but the type and extent of change have varied. While union involvement and participation in change has
undoubtedly increased in some workplaces, broader survey work (such as in DIR, 1991) highlights the fact that there is still a general failure by management to consult with employees and unions, and that the structures for workplace bargaining are still underdeveloped\(^\text{13}\). The Accord itself may have contributed to the weakness of workplace union activity, as centralised wage bargains increased the power of central union officials (especially the ACTU), removed the need for workplace action to receive wage rises and made many unions appear remote and unnecessary to ordinary workers (Bramble, 1989; Costa and Duffy, 1991).

As is to be expected with a process which places a greater emphasis on bargaining at industry and enterprise level, progress is uneven and uncertain. Curtain and Mathews (1990a,b) have argued that there are broadly two models of award restructuring: the Cost-Minimisation Approach (CMA), and the Productivity Enhancement Approach (PEA). The latter reflects the ACTU’s broad agenda, while the former concentrates on narrow flexibility, cost-reduction methods of productivity improvement such as the ‘page 10 agenda’ of the AIRC’s September 1989 decision.

Curtain and Mathews estimate that only about 10% of firms have or are likely to adopt the PEA approach, while 50% have concentrated on a pure CMA. They argue that 40% of firms are somewhere in between these two extremes, and that the battle for the future of Australian industry lies with how unions fare in pushing them towards the PEA model.

The case studies of the banking, clothing and retail industries reported earlier in this report support this contention. Only in a few cases (such as the new department store, Daimaru) were broad based, PEA style reforms underway. The discussion of industry and enterprise developments above show a similar picture at enterprise level, but more widespread progress at industry level where unions have greater influence. As national and industry training structures and standards begin to be established, and bargaining structures become more streamlined through union mergers and the establishment of single bargaining units, we may expect more comprehensive change to occur.

Factors which appear to be favourable to comprehensive reform appear to be strong competitive pressures on the firm or industry; an internal labour market (or at least a strong enterprise element to workforce training, skills and careers); a simplified award and union structure; pro-active management and unions; and an extended period of negotiation and consultation over change.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Australian industrial relations are very different in 1991 from the situation which existed in 1981. The trade union agenda is also very different from the tentative and fairly defensive concerns which it held about new technology in the early 1980s. The period has seen some undoubted union successes:

* managerial prerogative at the workplace has been restricted through developments in legislation, through the Termination, Change and Redundancy decision (despite its limited impact so far), and through the award restructuring process;

\(^{13}\)For example, an analysis of the AWIRS by Green (1991) shows ‘a lack of permanent structures for consultation at the workplace’ (p.79); limited autonomy for workplace managers (only 22% are able to make decisions on significant change at the workplace), and poorly represented unions (only 43% of all workplaces with more than five employees are unionised, although this rises to 80% for workplaces with 20 or more employees, but even then, 34% of unionised workplaces have no union delegates).
the Accord with the government has given the ACTU unprecedented influence over economic and industrial policy, and has been the essential backdrop to a consensus oriented approach to change in industrial relations;

through documents such as *Australia Reconstructed*, the ACTU has set out a new, integrated vision for the union movement, which goes far beyond a defence of traditional 'labourism' and moves towards a more strategic approach to change, including an historic restructuring of the union movement itself;

award restructuring and the SEP have supported the union agenda for macro and micro factors to be linked to industry development, and introduced a new appreciation of skill formation and work organisation as essential to the revitalisation of Australian industry.

To achieve these successes, a number of factors have been influential:

- government support, not just through the Accord and its supportive policies, but also in terms of programs and grants for industrial democracy, tripartite industry missions and workplace resource centres, and supportive legislation for training and union reform;

- the AIRC, which has facilitated the union agenda to a large degree, and - through its responsibility for 85% of the workforce through awards - has ensured a more consensual approach to change through the system of conciliation and arbitration than would perhaps have occurred otherwise (Curtain, 1990a);

- the economic imperative, brought about by internationalisation and the threat to manufacturing industry in particular;

- the acquiescence or inability of employers in controlling the reform agenda, due to divisions between those wanting to retain the centralised wage system and those wishing to move more fully into an enterprise-based system, and between those with a co-operative and those with a more confrontationist approach to unions and change; and

- a trade union leadership which has been prepared to overthrow past policies and practices and take a more long-term, strategic view of the future of Australian industry, work organisation and the union movement itself.

Prospects for the future, however, may not necessarily be as bright. Each of the factors mentioned above may change:

if the conservative parties were to win the next election they have indicated their intention to implement wholehearted labour market deregulation, severely limiting the role of the AIRC and trade unions, and adopting a less consensus-based approach to change, as has occurred in New South Wales;

- the recession has heightened criticism and frustration with the pace and rewards of award restructuring from employers and unionists alike, and by reducing the bargaining strength of the trade unions it has made it more difficult to impose their agenda on enterprise bargaining and award restructuring process;

- employers are increasingly united on the need to accelerate enterprise bargaining (the CAI has changed its policy and now supports the dismantling of the centralised wages system) and to move towards fully blown enterprise unionism in particular; and
there is increased concern within the union movement at the tactics of the ACTU leadership, particularly over its campaign to seek the most recent Accord VI 'in the field', just as recession was setting in.

Consequently, the consensual framework in which unions have been able to change their policies, increase their influence over bargaining at all levels, and in which a 'managed decentralism' of the industrial relations system has been achieved with minimal confrontation, may not persist.

More fundamental, however, are a number of issues which loom large over the future, and which reflect some of the weaknesses of the award restructuring process. The resolution of these issues will largely determine the pace and shape of industrial relations - and possibly the future of trade unions - in Australia.

Despite its achievements to date and its comprehensive and broad sweep, award restructuring appears fragile, precisely because of its ambitious nature. In particular, it has been asked to shoulder responsibility for a number of policy areas - wages policy, industry development, work organisation, industrial relations, and education and training policy - for which it is only partially responsible. The multi-faceted nature of the award restructuring process makes it vulnerable, should any one component fail to deliver. In particular, progress in work organisation and training may be held back by the inability of the economy to deliver real wage increases and to overcome the problems of manufacturing industry. Solutions for these issues must, in large part, lie elsewhere (at the macro level), and putting all the emphasis on award restructuring is probably asking too much of it.

For example, tying wage rises solely to productivity and work reforms at enterprise and industry level is already being questioned by many commentators and unions in the face of declining real wage levels under the Accord, which are now not even compensated for by employment growth, given the severity of the current recession (Bramble, 1989; Burgess, 1991; Stilwell, 1991).

Consequently, in the face of the recession and expressions of concern from some of its less industrially powerful union affiliates, the ACTU is beginning to argue for at least a partial return to cost-of-living based wage increases, since sole reliance on enterprise-based productivity bargaining as the source of wage increases has the potential to leave less well organised workers behind and to increase divisions within the workforce. The most recent AIRC decision has left open the possibility of a generalised national wage increase next year, which may give award restructuring some much needed breathing space.

Similarly, the limitations of the focus by the union movement on work organisation reform as the key to the revitalisation of industry are becoming more evident. While new forms of work organisation and a highly skilled workforce are necessary elements of a shift to a quality-based, value-added industrial structure, they are not sufficient (AMC, 1990). Indeed, without an expansive, modernised approach to industry development, there is little need or reason for firms to undertake comprehensive work organisation reform and skill formation. The direction of causation flows much more from industry and firm strategy to the workplace than vice-versa. Examples of firms which have failed, despite quite comprehensive attempts at workplace reform along lines similar to those favoured by the ACTU, have become increasingly common14 and highlight the need for industry policy to be pursued through means in addition to (and in concert with) award restructuring. Until now, however,

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14 One company, Hexham Engineering, was commonly cited by government and unions as an example of how work organisation can be reformed along the lines suggested by the ACTU (NLCC, 1988) - however, it has since gone into liquidation.
government economic policy has restricted interventionist industry policy at the macro level, and pushed the venue for change to the workplace, where unions have less power and influence over strategic decision making. While industry continues to weaken under the pressure of restrictive demand policies, it will be impossible to give the job security necessary for workers to have confidence in undergoing major workplace change.

A third issue which award restructuring has yet to tackle effectively has been the flexibility question, and the balance between the various types of labour and organisational flexibility. Results from the SEP have been mixed so far. While Ogden argues that 'our best defence against extreme casualisation and sub-contracting is to have a highly skilled local workforce' (1991, p.4), it appears that to achieve many of their broader participative, skill and work organisation goals, unions have had to concede many of the narrower flexibility measures sought by employers which the strategy was in some ways intended to prevent (even the metal unions have accepted part-time work). However, cases such as Daimaru (the new retail store in Melbourne) may begin to help turn this tide.

Finally, enterprise bargaining and the place of trade unions within it are likely to dominate the next few years of Australian industrial relations. The decentralisation of collective bargaining and industrial relations in general contains opportunities, but also dangers for the economy and for the union movement. At the macro level, the problem of containing aggregate wage costs has been acknowledged but is not yet resolved, although the current high level of unemployment makes a wage breakout unlikely. Also unresolved is the situation of lower paid and less organised workers, who are unable to easily demonstrate productivity gains or win wage rises at the enterprise level. Women, for example, have made fewer gains under the new wage principles (Wooden and Sloan, 1990).

Perhaps even more importantly, there is a gathering momentum to the argument that a push to enterprise bargaining should be accompanied by enterprise unions (or no unions at all), which may be difficult to overcome for a union movement which is still in the throes of attempting to reorganise itself along industry lines. Such a development holds great dangers for trade unions and for the possibilities of a co-operative, Productivity Enhancement Approach to change.

While some industries have incorporated consultative procedures into their awards, workplace bargaining and consultative structures are still quite weak, and there is too little evidence of Australian management having shifted from its tendency to hide behind managerial prerogative. Left to itself, management in Australia is unlikely to adopt a consensual, participative style which involves unions or employees - especially in a recession. Instead, they are more likely to attempt 'quick fix' productivity gains and wage trade-offs through concentration on narrow forms of flexibility and increased intensity of work - the Cost Minimisation Approach.

The key to overcoming this narrow view lies both in maintaining union strength and influence, and in an industry policy which forces a broader vision on Australian industry. Provisions establishing structures which will ensure union and employee rights to information and participation at the workplace, perhaps along the lines of existing occupational health and safety legislation or a stronger version of the TCR decision, are essential if the enterprise is to become the focus for industrial relations and collective bargaining in the future (Green, 1991). Entrenching and enhancing employee participation in the enterprise would force unions to increase their workplace representative structures; prevent management from adopting too readily a unilateralist, cost-minimisation approach to work organisation reform; and help to prevent some of the more important advances made by the union movement over the past few years in consultation and participation rights from being destroyed by a conservative onslaught in the future.
### TABLE 1 - PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA, 1971-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MALES No. ('000)</th>
<th>MALES % of males employed p/t</th>
<th>FEMALES No. ('000)</th>
<th>FEMALES % of females employed p/t</th>
<th>PERSONS No. ('000)</th>
<th>PERSONS % of persons employed p/t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>112.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>463.8</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>576.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>170.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>690.2</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>860.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>222.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>834.3</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>1056.6</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>280.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1029.5</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>1303.3</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>414.7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>1307.8</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>1722.5</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS, Labour Statistics, Australia (cat. no. 6101.0); Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6203.0)

### TABLE 2 - PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT: INDUSTRY DISTRIBUTION, MAY 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agric., forestry &amp; fishing</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>127.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>144.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas &amp; water</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>144.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>177.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>173.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>139.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
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<td>24.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>140.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fin., prop. &amp; bus. services</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>210.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public admin. &amp; defence</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>197.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community services</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>170.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rec., personal, other services</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>163.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL PART-TIME WORKERS</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>166.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6203.0)
### TABLE 3 - CASUAL EMPLOYEES, 1982-89

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>PERSONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(casuals as % of employees)</td>
<td>(casuals as % of employees)</td>
<td>No. of casuals ('000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>688.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>848.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>887.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>979.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>1064.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>1152.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>1298.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Derived from Dawkins and Norris, 1990, p.164 and based on ABS, Employment Benefits, (cat. no. 6334.0)*

### TABLE 4 - ALL EMPLOYEES: AWARD COVERAGE, 1985-1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Non-managerial</th>
<th>Managerial, executive, etc.</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>90.8 (Full-time)</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>85.7 (Full-time)</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Source: ABS, Incidence of Industrial Awards, (cat. no. 6315.0)*
TABLE 5 - Analysis of Second Tier Agreements in the Metal Industry

Agreements ranked in Grades 1 to 4,
(1 = no change, 4 = substantial change)
by specific category
(Total number of agreements analysed : 1,334)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>RANKING</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>least change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALRC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of Work</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demarcation</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rostered Days Off</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export, R &amp; D</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Patterns</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Technology</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management/Worker Consultation</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disputes Settlement</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronic Funds Transfer</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Contractors</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Research Office, AMWU, reproduced in Curtain, 1990a
Table 6 - Classification Structure, New Metal Industry Award

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wage group</th>
<th>Classification title</th>
<th>Minimum training requirement</th>
<th>Wage relativity to C10 after full minimum rate and broadbading adjustments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Professional engineer</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional scientist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2(b)</td>
<td>Principal technical officer</td>
<td>Diploma or formal equivalent</td>
<td>160%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2(a)</td>
<td>Leading technical officer</td>
<td>5th year of diploma or formal equivalent</td>
<td>150%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal engineering supervisor/trainer/co-ordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>Engineering associate</td>
<td>Associate diploma or formal equivalent</td>
<td>145%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— level II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>Engineering associate</td>
<td>3rd year of associate diploma or formal equivalent</td>
<td>135%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— level I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>Engineering technician</td>
<td>Advanced certificate or formal equivalent</td>
<td>130%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— level V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>Engineering technician</td>
<td>1st year of advanced certificate</td>
<td>125%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— level IV Advanced engineering tradesperson — level I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>Engineering technician</td>
<td>Post-trade certificate or formal equivalent</td>
<td>115%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— level III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering tradesperson — special class level II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>Engineering technician</td>
<td>Completion of 66% of qualification for C7</td>
<td>110%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— level II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering tradesperson — special class level I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
<td>Engineering technician</td>
<td>Completion of 33% of qualification for C7</td>
<td>105%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— level I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering tradesperson — level II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>Engineering tradesperson — level I</td>
<td>Trade certificate or production/engineering certificate III</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production system employee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C11</td>
<td>Engineering/production employee — level IV</td>
<td>Production/engineering certificate II</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C12</td>
<td>Engineering/production employee — level III</td>
<td>Production/engineering certificate I</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C13</td>
<td>Engineering/production employee — level II</td>
<td>In-house training</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C14</td>
<td>Engineering/production employee — level I</td>
<td>Up to 38 hours induction training</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supervisory training
Level 1 — 122% of the highest rate paid to those supervised.
Level 2 — 115% of the highest rate paid to those supervised.
Technical — 107% of the rate paid for the employee's technical classification.
Table 7 - Changes agreed to under the Structural Efficiency Principle and Progress in their Implementation (per cent) \( (n = 139) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change agreed to</th>
<th>Progress of Implementation</th>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some, but change not in place</th>
<th>Change fully in place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reduction in number of job classifications</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Establishment of new skills-related career paths</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. New training arrangements for employees</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. New training arrangements for supervisors</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reduced demarcation lines</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Broadening the range of tasks performed by employees (multi-skilling)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Introduction of consultative/employee participation arrangements</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. New forms of work organisation</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. More flexible working hours arrangements</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Averaging or removal of penalty rates</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Altered terms and conditions for part-time and casual employment</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Reduction in overmanning</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Greater flexibility in the taking of annual leave</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>21/0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Compensating overtime with time off</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Changes in payment periods and methods</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Review of sick leave provisions</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Rationalising award coverage at this workplace</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1: Number of workplaces where change agreed to under SEP.  
(Source: derived from Sloan and Wooden 19900: Table 5)
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